

U.S.-China trade war looms

BEIJING (R) — China on Saturday announced a series of retaliatory measures after the United States put \$2.8 billion worth of Chinese goods on a tentative list for punitive tariffs. Xinhua news agency said. The threatened retaliation included suspending talks on joint ventures with major U.S. automobile manufacturers, it said. The United States has listed \$2.8 billion in Chinese goods that could be hit with sanctions unless China moves to halt piracy of U.S. compact discs, computer software and other copyright goods. A statement by U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor's office said the list would be open for public comment for 30 days and that he would make a final decision on trade sanctions on Feb. 4. Mr. Kantor also tied the dispute to China's request for admission to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and its successor, the World Trade Organisation. The United States has opposed Chinese membership.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية مستقلة تصدر عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية. الراي.

Happy New Year

The Jordan Times will not appear on Monday, Jan. 2, 1995, due to the New Year holiday on Sunday, Jan. 1, 1995. The next issue of the paper will be published on Tuesday, Jan. 3. The editor and staff of the Jordan Times wish the paper's readers and advertisers a very happy and prosperous New Year.

Volume 19 Number 5807

AMMAN SUNDAY-MONDAY, JANUARY 1-2, 1995, RAJAB 29-30, 1415

Price: Jordan 150 Fils

Russians storm Grozny against fierce resistance

GROZNY (Agencies) — Russian soldiers stormed Grozny on Saturday, blazing their way through heavy Chechen resistance to the centre of the city.

Russian tanks and armoured cars, backed by a colossal artillery barrage, war planes and helicopter gunships, pushed through Grozny suburbs to finally crush the Caucasus republic's three-year independence drive.

A kilometre from the centre, a huge fire gushing black smoke could be seen in the direction of the presidential palace, but residents said the fire came from a burning oil tank. A Chechen television camera left running in the window of the central building continued to transmit grainy pictures of Russian armoured vehicles blazing in all directions around the main square.

The Chechen defence chief appeared on television just before 5:00 p.m. and, appearing quite calm, said that the defence of the city was going well, that 50 Russian armoured vehicles had been destroyed and prisoners taken.

In Moscow, officials at the Defence Ministry said the Russian troops had not made "extraordinary efforts" to take Grozny by force but were simply carrying out "a takeover of the city in line with plans prepared in advance," Interfax news agency said.

The "highly placed" officials did not rule out a "pause" in the fighting as midnight and the New Year came closer.

Russian news agencies reported from Grozny that several buildings in the city

centre were on fire, including a palace formerly used by Chechen leader Dzhokhar Dudayev. A petrol storage depot was also in flames.

It was not clear from the reports whether the targets in the centre were hit by planes or artillery.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin said on Tuesday air raids on Grozny would stop. But journalists, speaking by telephone, said several civilians were killed in the raids, which also damaged a five-storey apartment block and other buildings.

They said it was impossible to determine the number of casualties immediately but quoted a fleeing resident as saying: "The night was so quiet that most of us had left the bomb shelters when the planes came."

A Russian government information centre, set up to present an official version of events in Chechnya, was unable to give any information and declined to confirm or deny the air raid.

The journalists said bombs landed not far from an oil refinery which has been on fire since Thursday. The blaze sent thick clouds of smoke billowing over the city.

Grozny had no water or electricity and long queues formed outside the new bakeries still working, they said.

Reuters photographers quoted Russian officers as saying Chechen forces had stepped up their guerrilla campaign. Mines blew up three cars from one unit alone on Thursday night and several servicemen were wounded, they said.

The all-out assault began

Saturday with dawn air raids on Chechen stations outside Grozny and on at least one civilian neighbourhood, followed by a deafening artillery and rocket duel, with rounds exploding every couple of seconds for sustained periods.

The decision to storm Grozny was taken as Russian troops, sent to Chechnya three weeks ago to crush the Muslim republic's independence, were getting bogged down in clashes with highly mobile but lightly armed Chechens.

After about six hours of intense fighting, an uneasy quiet hung over the blacked-out city. Only sporadic small arms fire and the almost constant buzzing of jets could be heard.

The battle was fought under an apocalyptic sky, black with oil smoke from vast storage containers around the city repeatedly bombed by Russian airplanes.

The sun was virtually blotted out by 2:30 p.m. and Chechens said the darkness would serve their hit-and-run street fighting tactics well.

Several fighters said the Chechen counterattack could only begin now that the Russians were caught in narrow streets. The tactic worked on Nov. 26 when a pro-Russian Chechen force made it to central Grozny, but was then devastated by anti-tank weapons in streetfighting.

In the labyrinth of side streets and alleys leading up to the presidential palace, Chechens weaved and sprinted to avoid the snipers, who duelled through the trees and down deserted streets. Red and yellow trac-

er rounds could be seen flying over houses and bullets whined through the air.

"On the (central) rail crossing they were shooting at everybody, whether they were armed or not. Someone was killed in front of my eyes with a heavy machine gun," said Ruslan Matsayev, a 30-year-old mechanic.

But in the battle for Grozny, the line between civilian and non-civilian is blurred.

As two tanks rumbled by in the darkness, a man in civilian clothes dashed up to check whether they were Chechen or Russian. "They were ours. Otherwise they would have got this," he grinned, taking a grenade from his anorak pocket.

Chechens, in groups of four or five, moved quickly through the tortuous back streets, pausing sometimes to listen for planes or the direction of sniper fire.

One squad armed with grenades and rifles set off to hunt a sniper, another manned a heavy machine gun hidden under a pile of branches, and another crouched in the shelter of a garden gate, armed with rocket propelled grenades.

"We've come from home, we've come to give our help to the president, our sovereignty and our freedom," said one volunteer soldier, Ahmed Adamyev, a 32-year-old taxi driver off to the front with four friends.

The main streets were icy and deserted. Even the hundreds of stray dogs left behind in the last three weeks by their refugee owners had disappeared. The only cars on the street drove fast and often without headlights.



Chechen volunteers guard the presidential palace in Grozny's main square on Friday. Russian President Boris Yeltsin sent New Year greetings to his troops in Chechnya, urging them to do their duty, while rebel President Dzhokhar Dudayev of Chechnya issued an appeal for a new year ceasefire (AFP photo)

'Second Bahraini cleric held'

NICOSIA (Agencies) — A leading Shiite Muslim cleric has been arrested in Bahrain where clashes erupted earlier in December after a similar arrest reportedly leaving 15 people dead, diplomats said Saturday.

Sheikh Mohammad Ali Al Akri was arrested a week ago for trying to hand a letter to the emir, Sheikh Issa Ben Salman Al Khalifa, calling for the restoration of parliament, diplomats contacted from Cyprus said.

Hundreds of young Shiites protested in Manama and other Shiite areas for several days after the arrest of cleric Sheikh Ali Salman on Dec. 5. Sheikh Ali was also arrested for handing a letter to the emir asking for parliament suspended in 1975 to be restored.

Diplomats said Sheikh Mohammad, who had called for dialogue during the troubles, condemning the street protests and the use of violence wanted to hand over a letter containing demands made by Bahraini theologians.

The ulama have already called for "the restoration of parliamentary life as soon as possible, a radical end to the problems of unemployment, a wage increase and price controls."

They also demanded "freedom of the press and expression, the release of political detainees, and an end to the violation of citizens' rights, in particular the right to travel and return to the country."

The opposition in exile, the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain (IFLB), said 15 people were killed in the protests which erupted after Sheikh Ali's arrest and more than 2,000 arrested.

Bahraini authorities said only one person, a policeman, had been killed.

Meanwhile in Sitra, close to Manama, household rubbish has not been collected for more than two weeks to punish demonstrators who destroyed the authorities' vehicles during the unrest, witnesses said.

Foreign nationals in Manama have been urged to leave the country in letter from unidentified opposition groups angry at "the privileges they enjoy while the original inhabitants are without work."

The London-based IFLB said in a statement that protests erupted on Thursday in at least eight areas of the country. It reported arrests in several areas and said protesters pelted police with stones.

Bahrain's government says the disturbances, planned to coincide with a summit of Gulf leaders in Bahrain in December, have been quelled.

Jordan hopes mini-summit positive for Arab World

Jordan-Syria ties 'quiet,' no enmity — Majali

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan views the Arab mini-summit held in Alexandria grouping the heads of Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia as a "positive gathering of Arab leaders that could result in benefits to the Arab World, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali has said.

In a statement to British radio on Saturday, the prime minister said he hoped such meetings would help end differences among Arab countries so that Arab reconciliation and solidarity could be restored.

"Jordan has always been calling for Arab meetings where the Arab leaders could eliminate their differences," said the prime minister, who reiterated his earlier proposal for rescheduling differences in views among Arab states and enhancing the "positive elements that tend to bring the Arabs closer together."



Abdul Salam Majali

Referring to Jordan's ties with Syria, Dr. Majali said that it was a "quiet relationship void of any form of enmity." Each country has its own approach of handling the peace process, he said. But

he denied that Jordan has concluded a peace separate from the other Arab parties.

"We stand alongside Syria and we wish that Damascus would reach a formula by which it would ensure its full rights," said Dr. Majali, "we encourage this trend and work towards making it come true."

The prime minister said that Egypt had blessed the Jordan-Israeli peace treaty. Cairo has played a key role in the peace process and continues to do so, he noted.

The prime minister's statement came one day after the Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid described the Arab mini-summit in Alexandria as a turning point in the Arab regional and international arenas.

He said the summit would have a positive impact on the Arab Nation.

'Bosnia agrees to cease hostilities'

SARAJEVO (AFP) — The Bosnian government Saturday agreed to a four-month cessation of hostilities and was preparing to sign the accord in the presence of U.N. negotiators, U.N. spokesman Herve Gourmelon announced here.

He said Bosnian Vice President Ejup Ganic had told U.N. special envoy Yasushi Akashi and U.N. Bosnian Commander General Michael Rose that the government would accept a comprehensive truce with Bosnian Serb forces.

Mr. Akashi and Commander Gen. Rose were expected to travel later to the Serb stronghold at Pale east of here, where Serb authorities have said they too will sign the pact.

The U.N. announcement was a marked turnaround from earlier reports that U.N. negotiators had made little headway in securing the four-month truce.

A ceasefire has been in effect since Dec. 24. But the United Nations has been eager to replace the ceasefire, which is generally holding in Bosnia except in the Bihać pocket in the northwest, with a full cessation of hostilities that would allow for the interposition of U.N. forces between the warring sides.

The broader accord would also allow for a resumption of formal negotiations on a definitive end to the 32-month-old war (see earlier story on page 5).

Israel must prove it wants peace process to go on—PLO

CAIRO (Agencies) — A senior Palestinian official said Saturday that Israel must prove it wants the peace process to move forward by acting to halt settlement building in the occupied West Bank.

"Israel must take its final stand on settlement and show its will to pursue the peace process," Faisal Hussein told Egyptian radio.

"Israel must respect the accords it signed with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) which stipulates a freeze on settlements in the occupied territories," said the leading PLO figure in the West Bank.

Mr. Hussein, a member of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), warned that autonomy talks next week in Cairo could be the last chance to resolve the settlement dispute and save the peace process.

"If this is not decided at the next meeting... it will be the final sign that Israel wants to get out of the peace process," he said. He did not indicate what would happen if the settlement issue was not resolved at the session.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and the PLO's chief autonomy negotiator Nabil Shaath will resume talks Tuesday on the extension of self-rule on the West Bank.

It will be the first such meeting since the row over the expansion of the Jewish settlement of Ephraim. On Monday, the Israeli government is to examine the legal means of halting the construction work there.

The autonomy negotiations have stalled over Israel's desire to limit — for "security" reasons — its army redeployment on the West Bank before elections to a self-rule council.

In Gaza City, the PNA said Saturday it would seek an emergency U.N. Security Council debate on Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank.

Palestinian officials said they would also take their protest to a meeting with the Israelis on Tuesday in Cairo.

"Either there is total cessation of the settler activity or there will be total collapse of the peace process," warned Yasser Abed Rabbo, the culture minister, following the weekly meeting of the Palestinian cabinet.

"We are going to call for an immediate meeting of the (U.N.) Security Council after the New Year holiday. We are not waiting for anything," he said.

The Palestinian cabinet also condemned new settlements as "dangerous" and called for intervention by the Security Council, the European Union and the peace process co-sponsors, Washington and Moscow.

Israeli Science and Communications Minister Shlomo Aloni on Saturday also condemned the expansion work, saying the government had no right to transfer the extra land to Ephraim settlement.

"State land should be made available to the Palestinian population. It's theft, pure and simple," said Mr. Aloni, who belongs to the left-wing Meretz in the Labour-led ruling coalition.

Twenty-nine demonstrators were detained on Friday after a pitched battle with the army during a protest over the expansion of the Jewish settlement.

Seventeen of those held were Israelis, eight foreigners and the other four Palestinians. They were questioned on charges of a breaking into a "closed military zone" and using violence against security forces, before being freed.

The army said 16 people were injured in the protest, including six soldiers. Fifteen demonstrators, including three women, were injured, according to the Palestinians, as the two sides fought with fists and batons.

The demonstrators ignored an army ban against protests

at the site of the expansion work on the settlement. A curfew was later imposed on the area.

Giant bulldozers have been working at the site to flatten the ground ahead of the construction work. The clashes erupted when demonstrators tried to march on the site.

PNA Chairman Yasser Arafat called the settlement a "flagrant violation" of the 1993 peace accord. He said Palestinians would not accept the new building in an area slated to eventually come under their rule.

"They don't know that the Palestinian people is not affected by injuries and by clashes," he told a crowd at a Gaza rally for the 30th anniversary of his Fatah organisation.

"This land is Palestinian land. I tell them this is a flagrant violation of the accord which we will not accept."

Ahmad Tibi, an adviser to Mr. Arafat, said Israeli troops beat him with the butts of their guns.

"We have been attacked by rifles, by pushing, we have been hit, women and children, by the Israeli soldiers," Mr. Tibi said. "I am shocked by the brutal behaviour of the Israeli soldiers, especially some of the police officers."

The clashes deepened a quandary for Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, keen to keep sluggish self-rule talks from derailing.

Witnesses said demonstrators charged scores of Israeli troops guarding the construction site. Demonstrators also threw stones at border police troops, knocking one unconscious and cutting another in the forehead.

Troops pushed back the protesters, in some cases clubbing them.

Dr. Tibi said troops provoked the demonstrators. "I am sorry to say may be there were instructions to do so. Soldiers invaded 200 metres inside the demonstration and started to hit people."

General strike called in Algeria as priests buried

ALGIERS (Agencies) — Berber movements called for a general strike in Tizi-Ouzou, the capital of Algeria's Grand Kabylie region Saturday during the burial of three of the four priests murdered there on Tuesday.

The Berber Cultural Movement (MCB) backed the appeal and asked people to show their disgust at the killings by massing at the Christian cemetery in the town, 110 kilometres east of Algiers.

The body of the fourth victim will be repatriated to France for burial in his hometown.

The murders were claimed by the Armed Islamic Group (GIA). The four Roman Catholic priests, from the small White Fathers' mission, were machine-gunned to death by six men who posed as police to get inside their presbytery building.

Police said the extremists, who were equipped with Kalashnikovs and walkie-talkies, had planned to abduct the priests in retaliation for the killing of four fundamentalist hijackers by French elite troops on an Air France plane in Marseille last Monday.

The four priests were shot when they discovered the trick and tried to escape. The Berbers, the original inhabitants of the Maghreb, are Muslim, but by and large have nothing to do with the radical views enforced at gunpoint by the militant groups

which have infiltrated their mountains and dense forests.

Rag-tag civilian defence groups have been set up in hundreds of Berber villages scattered throughout the highlands of the Great and Little Kabylie, to protect them from the gunmen.

They have acted as mountain retreats where Berber ways of village life persist, and where the population has campaigned for official recognition of the Berber language, Tamazight, alongside Arabic.

Tuesday's killings brought to 76 the number of foreigners killed in Algeria since September 1993. Of those, 25 victims have been French nationals.

Two French clerics, a priest and a nun, and two Spanish nuns were murdered in May and October by militants in Algiers.

Church authorities have closed their churches because of the escalating violence, and services are often held in private homes.

Clerics have stopped wearing their robes in public. The attack was the bloodiest in Tizi-Ouzou since the violence began in Algeria in 1992.

In Paris, the French anti-terrorism magistrate probing whether hijackers on the French airliner had accomplices travelled on Saturday to make his first inspection of the bullet-ridden jet, judicial sources said.

Jean-Louis Bruguiere, whose other cases include

compiling evidence against "Carlos the Jackal," arrived in Marseilles after flying from Paris.

French commandos stormed the airliner on Monday, killing four militants and ending a 34-hour ordeal for 169 hostages aboard. The hijackers killed three passengers in Algiers after seizing it on Christmas eve.

Mr. Bruguiere, who has headed most of France's top anti-terrorism cases for the past decade, is to try to discover whether the hijackers had accomplices, either in France or Algeria. He was examining the jet for clues.

Many in France have been shocked by the apparent ease with which the guerrillas, carrying dynamite and guns, boarded the plane in Algiers.

The French daily Le Figaro on Saturday quoted an Algerian passenger as saying a fifth man came onto the plane with the four hijackers and left a suitcase before getting off.

The passenger also said the hijackers boasted of having "more than 300 accomplices in the airport. The Armed Islamic group claimed responsibility for the hijacking."

French President Francois Mitterrand congratulated Air France for its handling of the crisis.

One of the four hijackers was among 1,000 Islamic militants who staged a jail break from an Algerian prison early this year, the daily Le Matin reported Saturday.

Heavy fighting erupts in Somali capital

MOGADISHU (R) — Heavy fighting broke out on Saturday in a central district of Somalia's capital and the last Zimbabwean troops left for home as part of a U.N. military pullout.

Witnesses said battles between Abgal and Murusade militiamen erupted in the central district late in the morning with fighters using mortars, recoilless cannon and anti-tank rockets.

There were no immediate casualty reports available.

It was the worst violence in the capital since Abgal gunmen overran areas in Medina district held by Murusade 10 days ago after street-to-street clashes that killed more than 20 people.

Medina is seen as a strategic area to hold because it is close to the U.N.-controlled airport, which Bermuda overlooks.

The Abgal militiamen are loyal to self-styled President Ali Mahdi Muhammad while the Murusade are led by Mohammed Kanyare Afrah, who defected in September from Mr. Ali Mahdi's coalition to Mohammed Farah Aided's rival Somali National Alliance.

U.N. military spokesman Major Zubair Chatha said a U.N. chartered plane carrying the last 300 Zimbabwean troops earlier on Saturday.

The Zimbabweans had two men killed during their one-year stay in Somalia, where failure of warlords to agree on peace prompted the U.N. Security Council to order all forces out.

A spokesman for a consortium of Somali aid agencies said its secretary-general, Aweys Maye, was freed in Mogadishu on Friday, three days after he was kidnapped by gunmen demanding a ransom.

The spokesman said no ransom was paid for Mr. Maye, the second Somali aid

agency official abducted in Mogadishu since November.

Officials said a French aid worker kidnapped two weeks ago remained in captivity despite earlier hopes this week that he would soon be freed following negotiations with his captors.

Rudy Marcq, 24, who works for Action Internationale Contre la Faim (AICF-International Action Against Hunger), was abducted by gunmen demanding a \$20,000 ransom and was seen last Tuesday by Somali Red Crescent officials who said he was in good health.

Gunmen demanding ransoms have kidnapped several foreign aid workers in Somalia in the past year but freed all of them. U.N. officials say they fear for the safety of foreign aid workers in Somalia with the withdrawal of the last U.N. forces.

George Bennett, spokesman for the U.N. operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), said troops would abandon their heavily-fortified headquarters compound in Mogadishu in January and pull back to the seaport and airport.

UNOSOM equipment and portable cabins used as offices and sleeping quarters are daily moved by truck out of the compound.

The number of Somali militiamen aboard "technical" battle wagons mounted with heavy and medium weapons seen on the streets of Mogadishu is increasing as the U.N. withdrawal gathers pace.

They are concentrating on streets around U.N. military and civilian installations in apparent preparation to take them over as soon as the last U.N. soldiers leave for good.

UNOSOM was the largest single employer in Somalia, which has had no government since the overthrow of dictator Mohammed Siad Barre in January 1991.



Palestinians protest during a Peace Now demonstration in El Khader Friday against the construction work for an enlargement of the Israeli settlement Ephraim. The peaceful protest turned violent when demonstrators started to march towards the disputed hillside against Israeli army orders. Several people were wounded and many arrests were made (AFP photo)

U.N. probes Iraq-Kuwait border shooting

KUWAIT (R) — United Nations observers said on Saturday they are investigating the wounding of one of their unarmed officers on the volatile Iraq-Kuwait border but are patrolling as normal in the meantime.

"The military observers continue to observe the border at day and night quite normally," Saleem Fahmawi, United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observers Mission (UNIKOM) spokesman, told Reuters.

A Romanian UNIKOM observer, Captain Danut Iovanov, was wounded by bullets fired from the Iraqi side of the border while on a routine patrol early on Thursday.

The incident will not deter observers from performing their duty, Mr. Fahmawi said. "It is an isolated incident as far as we are concerned."

"We are conducting an investigation and until it is finished we cannot say anything (further)."

Capt. Iovanov, receiving treatment in a Kuwaiti hospital, told Reuters he will resume his duties after recovering from wounds in both legs caused by bullets from an AK-47 rifle.

UNIKOM says about 40 bullets were fired from two positions on the Iraqi side of the border at the UNIKOM vehicle patrolling on the Kuwaiti side. Ten bullets hit the car.

Neither Capt. Iovanov nor a Russian major accompanying him were able to identify the assailants, a UNIKOM officer said.

The Kuwait news agency on Thursday quoted a defence ministry statement as saying Iraqi troops fired the shots.

Since the end of the 1991 Gulf war, in which a U.S.-led force freed Kuwait from Iraqi occupation, unarmed UNIKOM officers have patrolled the 210-kilometre newly-demarcated border strip stretching five kilometres into Kuwait and 10 kilometres into Iraq.

The previously-unmarked border had been disputed for decades. The border strip,

NEWS IN BRIEF

Germany allocates further aid to Palestinians

BONN (R) — Germany has said it was allocating a further 21.4 million marks (\$13.8 million) to support economic development in the Palestinian autonomous areas and to help defuse political and economic tension. Bonn's ministry for economic cooperation and development said five million marks (\$3.2 million) would be earmarked for job creation through the construction of schools and hospital facilities. Another 10 million marks (\$6.4 million) will pay for business start-up help for qualified workers returning from abroad, and \$6.3 million marks (\$4.1 million) will go to train young people coming from refugee camps or prisons, or returning from abroad. The allocation takes Germany's bilateral assistance to the Palestinians to 78.2 million marks (\$50.4 million) in 1994. It has also contributed 76 million marks (\$49 million) to European Union measures to support the Middle East peace process.

Jerusalem street to be named after massacre man

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The town hall has decided to name a street in Jerusalem after a man who planned the attack on Deir Yassin village where more than 150 Palestinians were massacred in April 1948. The Jerusalem weekly Kol Ha'ir said Friday the late Yehoshua Goldschmidt, a commander of Jewish irregulars, would have a street named after him. Goldschmidt was in charge of operations of the underground Irgun and had come up with the plan to attack the village at the western entrance to the Holy City. He did not personally take part and was killed two months later in fighting with the Jordanian army. The Deir Yassin attack, carried out by Irgun and Stern, another Jewish group, turned into a massacre and triggered a massive exodus of Palestinians from the Jerusalem region.

Kohl invites Weizman to commemorations

HAMBURG (AFP) — Chancellor Helmut Kohl has invited Israel's president to Germany to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the ending of World War II next May, according to Der Spiegel magazine. Mr. Kohl invited Ezer Weizman on a state visit to Germany through "confidential channels," the weekly said. The Israeli president had "given his agreement in principle" but the Israelis have still not made the invitation public, it said. It said the Chancellor plans to mark the anniversary, May 8, with a "reconciliation party" for Germans and their wartime enemies. Government spokesman Dieter Vogel said Thursday a final decision on the kind of celebrations or participants would not be taken for some weeks. "It goes without saying that we will celebrate the end of the war and freedom from national-socialism at the same time that we will honour the memory of the dead," Mr. Vogel said.

Palestinian post services start on Sunday

GAZA (R) — The Palestinian Authority intends to inaugurate its independent postal services between the self-rule areas of Gaza and Jericho and the world from Jan. 1, a communications official said on Saturday. Ahmad Skak, director general of the authority's communications department, said PNA Chairman Yasser Arafat will stamp the first letter at a ceremony in Gaza City on Sunday. The Palestinian Authority, which took charge of most of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank enclave of Jericho in May, has so far been using the Israeli postal service. Mr. Skak said Palestinian stamps have already been prepared and are available for public use in every post office in the self-rule areas.

Congo names first ambassador to Israel

BRAZZAVILLE (AFP) — Congolese former technical training minister Pierre-Michel Guimbi has been named Brazzaville's first ambassador to Israel. Radio Congo announced Saturday Congo and Israel restored diplomatic ties in 1991 after an 18-year rift sparked by the 1973 Israeli-Arab war. In July 1991, the two countries signed a cooperation protocol, which was followed up by a military agreement in December 1993. Under the latter, the Israeli government authorised the Levidan company to train the security guards of Congolese President Pascal Lissouba, as well as an elite police unit.

Protest held against Kurdish fighting in Iraq

TEHRAN (AFP) — Several demonstrations have been held in northern Iraq against the latest clashes between rival Kurdish factions in the region, the official Iranian news agency IRNA reported Saturday. The agency, quoting Kurdish witnesses, said major rallies were staged in the towns of Erbil and Sulaymaniyah. Demonstrators called for the United Nations to intervene to stop the fighting. Fierce clashes erupted last week between Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and an alliance of forces loyal to the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Kurdistan's Hizbollah. Northern Iraq has been under Kurdish control, with the backing of a U.S.-led multinational coalition and in defiance of Baghdad, since the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf war.

Perry to travel to Mideast, Asia

WASHINGTON (AFP) — U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry will travel to the Middle East and Asia in January, the Pentagon announced Friday. The trip scheduled for Jan. 6-14 will take Mr. Perry to Egypt, Israel, Pakistan and India, a statement said. The secretary will meet with high-level officials in order to strengthen military relationships with those countries, according to the department. Israel and Egypt are the top recipients of U.S. aid, with \$3 billion and \$2.2 billion a year respectively — \$1.8 billion and \$1.3 billion of those sums for military purposes.

Lebanese hunters up in arms over new ban

CHTAURA, Lebanon (AFP) — Lebanese hunters are up in arms at a three-year government ban on hunting aimed at protecting the declining bird population which comes into effect on New Year's Day.

"Over 10 million migratory birds are being shot each year over Lebanon," said Assad Serhal of the Society for the Protection of Nature and Natural Resources (SPNN), a non-government organisation.

But owners of sporting goods shops and cartridges factories have denounced the ban saying it will kill an industry worth millions of dollars and put thousands of families out of work.

Many of Lebanon's 200,000-300,000 licensed hunters have condemned the ban which comes into force on Sunday as an attack on civil liberties.

"They have no right to take hunting away from us. They could limit the season to three months but not scrap it all together," said hunter Elie Shartuni as he prepared for a final outing.

Tony Offish, who owns a shop specialising in hunting gear in the Bekaa Valley town of Chtaura, complained that sales have fallen dramatically since the environment and agriculture ministries announced the ban last January.

"You cannot imagine what this means to the Bekaa plain, where hundreds of

Egypt says it thwarted revival of militant group

CAIRO (Agencies) — Egypt said on Friday it had thwarted an attempt by convicted Muslim militants to revive a guerrilla group which planned assassinations and attacks on vital state institutions.

An Interior Ministry statement said five men — four of them behind bars and one on the run from a death sentence — masterminded the planning of the "New Vanguard of Conquest," one of a series of groups tracing themselves back to the "jihad" group which assassinated President Anwar Sadat in 1981.

It said security forces had arrested about 40 others, capturing automatic rifles, ammunition and knives as well as foreign currency and gold jewellery meant to finance their operations.

It named the leader of the group as Yasser Tawfik Ali Al Sirri, on the run from a death sentence for involvement in the attempt to assassinate Prime Minister Atef Sedki last year.

The group also claimed a failed assassination bid against Interior Minister Hassan Al Ali in August 1993. Five people were killed, including two of the assassins.

Military courts have sentenced 15 members of the group to death since the earlier round-up.

Three of the four who planned the rebirth of the group from behind bars were members of Jihad, the statement said.

It said some of those arrested had confessed to shooting a police guard and stealing his gun, as well as robbing jewellers.

Earlier on Friday security

Algeria group declares war on France over hijack

PARIS (AFP) — An armed Algerian Islamic group has declared open war on France, warning of action "in coming days" and fueling growing fears that the conflict in the former colony could spread to the French mainland.

The declaration, by the armed wing of the banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), dined a week of fears of reprisals following the bloody end to last weekend's Air France Airbus hijack, in which four fundamentalist hijackers were killed.

The Islamic Salvation Army (AIS) said that "war against France has become a legal duty" under Islamic Sharia law, because the French government had been shown to be in collaboration with the Algerian regime by the hijack drama.

"The Algerian nation is today directly in conflict with France and all those who support it, including the Jews and Christians of the world," it said in the latest edition of its newsletter, Al Feth Al Moumine (crushing victory).

"The AIS groups are capable of hitting France on its own territory and the coming days will show, with God's help, their capacity to strike the unbeliever in his own home," it said.

The AIS is the armed wing of the FIS, which has spearheaded the fundamentalist insurgency against the Algerian government since the army cancelled January 1992 elections the FIS was poised to win.

The Airbus hijack was the most spectacular incursion of the Algerian conflict into

| | | | |
|-------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| 14:25 | Moscow (SU) | 21:00 | Cairo (MS) |
| 20:05 | Cairo (MS) | 02:20 | Amsterdam (KL) |
| 20:20 | Beirut (MS) | | |
| 22:35 | Istanbul (TK) | | |
| 01:10 | Amsterdam (KL) | | |

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ)

Flights

(Terminal 1)

| | |
|-------|-------------------------------|
| 05:30 | Agaba (RJ) |
| 06:25 | Beirut (RJ) |
| 06:30 | Frankfurt (add) (RJ) |
| 06:35 | Tunis, Casablanca (RJ) |
| 07:40 | Vietnam (RJ) |
| 11:05 | Vietnam (add) (RJ) |
| 11:15 | Amsterdam, New York (RJ) |
| 11:20 | Rome (RJ) |
| 11:25 | Athens (RJ) |
| 11:30 | Doha, Bahrain (RJ) |
| 11:35 | Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ) |
| 11:40 | Beirut (RJ) |
| 11:45 | Doha, Bahrain (RJ) |
| 11:50 | Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ) |
| 11:55 | New Delhi (RJ) |
| 12:00 | Damascus (RJ) |
| 12:05 | Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ) |
| 12:10 | Bangkok, Jakarta (add) (RJ) |
| 12:15 | Singapore, Jakarta (add) (RJ) |
| 12:20 | Bangkok (RJ) |
| 12:25 | Agaba (RJ) |
| 12:30 | Suez (RJ) |

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

| | |
|-------|-------------------|
| 07:10 | Rome (AZ) |
| 07:45 | Beirut (MS) |
| 13:30 | Doha, Moscow (CF) |
| 16:05 | Moscow (SU) |

| | |
|---------------|------------------------|
| Dep. Amman | 8:00 a.m. every Monday |
| Arr. Damascus | 5:00 p.m. every Monday |
| Dep. Amman | 7:50 a.m. every Monday |
| Arr. Amman | 5:00 p.m. every Sunday |

MARKET PRICES

Uppertower price in fils per kg.

| | |
|--------------------|---------|
| Apple | 700/500 |
| Banana | 680 |
| Banana (Mukhammar) | 680 |
| Cabbage | 200/170 |
| Carrot | 280/180 |
| Camellflower | 440/300 |
| Cauliflower | 340/200 |
| Campump (large) | 500/280 |
| Campump (small) | 400/200 |
| Eggplant | 340/220 |
| Garlic | 350/400 |
| Green Peas | 230/180 |
| Marrow (large) | 220/180 |
| Marrow (small) | 200/100 |
| Onion (green) | 320/200 |
| Onion (dry) | 500/300 |
| Orange | 500/200 |
| Pepper (green) | 320/300 |
| Pepper (red) | 500/300 |
| Potato | 300/200 |
| Radish | 280/150 |
| Spinach | 320/220 |
| Tomato (green) | 300/200 |
| Tomato | 320/220 |

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Amman 11, Aqaba 19 Humidity readings: Amman 71 per cent, Aqaba 49 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Jamil Marqab 776149

Dr. Nidal Al'ad 751672

Dr. Khalil Abu Maryam 785525

Dr. Ghazi Abdullah 864286

Firas pharmacy 661912

Serhal pharmacy 775336

Al Aqaba pharmacy 637055

Nairoukh pharmacy 623672

Al Salam pharmacy 623670

Yacoub pharmacy 649495

Sumudini pharmacy 637660

Nairoukh pharmacy 623672

Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:

Dr. Akram Al Momani 248795

Alqods pharmacy (-)

ZARQA:

Dr. Samir Al Lawzi 989001

Khalil pharmacy 989417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111

Civil Defence Department 661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescues 630341

Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777

Fire Brigade 775121

Highway Police 843402

Traffic Police 896390

Public Security Department 630321

Hotel Complaints 605800

Price Complaints 661176

Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467

Amman Municipality Complaints 787111

Telephone Information 121

Directorate of Tourism 010230

Central Amman Telephone 623101

Aqaba Telephone Repair 661101

Jordan Television 773111

Radio Jordan 774111

Water Authority 680100

Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Company 636381

RJ Flight Information 06-35200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 06-35200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre 813613/32

Khalil Maternity, J. Amn 642816

624412

Jabal Amman Maternity 623626

Mathar, J. Amman 636140

Palestine, Shamsi 664174

Suez Canal Hospital 669131

University Hospital 843845

Al-Munasser Hospital 667227/9

Al-Ahli, Abdal 666127/9

Al-Ahli, Abdal 666164/6

Al-Ahli, Abdal 771003

Al-Bashir, J. Ashraf 771112/6

Army, Marika 891611/5

Queen Alia Hospital 662240/30

Amal Hospital 674155

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323

Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560

Bin Sina Hospital (09)986732

Al Husna Modern Hospital (09)999990

IRBID:

Rincez Basma Hospital (02)272555

Great Catholic Hospital (02)272225

Al Nubara Hospital (02)247108

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital (09)941111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

05:30 Bangkok (RJ)

06:25 Agaba (RJ)

06:30 Frankfurt (add) (RJ)

06:35 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)

07:40 Vietnam (RJ)

11:05 Vietnam (add) (RJ)

11:15 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)

11:20 Rome (RJ)

11:25 Athens (RJ)

11:30 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)

11:35 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)

11:40 Beirut (RJ)

11:45 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)

11:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)

11:55 New Delhi (RJ)

12:00 Damascus (RJ)

12:05 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)

12:10 Bangkok, Jakarta (RJ)

12:15 Singapore, Jakarta (RJ)

12:20 Bangkok (RJ)

12:25 Agaba (RJ)

12:30 Suez (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

07:10 Rome (AZ)

07:45 Beirut (MS)

13:30 Doha, Moscow (CF)

16:05 Moscow (SU)

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple 700/500

Banana 680

Banana (Mekkanmar) 620

Cabbage 200/120

Carrot 280/180

Cauliflower 440/300

Cucumber 340/200

Cucumber (large) 300/120

Cucumber (small) 600/400

Eggplant 340/220

Garlic 350/400

Leek 250/180

Marrow (large) 250/180

Marrow (small) 300/100

Onion (green) 320/200

Onion (dry) 500/120

Orange 300/200

Pepper (hot) 500/300

Pepper (sweet) 500/300

Potato 300/200

Radish 200/150

Squash 320/200

String Beans 500/600

Tomato 500/250



Regent condoles Turkish leaders, people over tragic air accident

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, sent letters of condolences to President Suleyman Demirel and Prime Minister Tansu Ciller of Turkey over the crash of a Turkish Airlines plane Thursday, a Royal Court statement said.

The Regent wrote to Mr. Demirel saying, "It was

with shock and sadness that we received news of the tragic accident that befell the Turkish Airlines Boeing 737. On behalf of His Majesty King Hussein, the government and the people of Jordan, please accept our sincerest condolences on the grievous loss of lives." In a similar message to Ms. Ciller, the

Crown Prince said, "Our thoughts and prayers are with you all at this sad time."

The Boeing 737-400 crashed into a mountain as it attempted a landing in a snowstorm at Van airport. As of Saturday, 56 of the 69 passengers on board were reported dead (see story page 12).



Minister of Water and Irrigation Saleh Irsheidat Saturday inaugurates the new water department branch in Qweismeh, south of Amman (Petra photo)

Irsheidat inaugurates new water department in Qweismeh

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Water and Irrigation Saleh Irsheidat Saturday inaugurated a new water department at Qweismeh south of Amman.

The new water department would cover an area of 700 square kilometres, extending from Muwaqqar and Sahab in the south to Naour and Marj Al Hamam in the north. The department will serve an estimated 220,000 inhabitants.

Dr. Irsheidat said that the ministry plans to set up similar departments in northern and western Amman districts serving the local population of Amman as well as the Baader Wadi Al Seer district.

The minister said that a JD 55.6 million plan is underway for the substitution of the old worn-out water networks in the Kingdom, in hopes that the replacement would re-

duce water wastage that results from leaking pipes.

According to the minister, the substitution of old networks has already started in Irbid, Ramtha, Zarqa, Salt and Mafrag. Last week, Dr. Irsheidat said that the ministry has allocated JD 2 million in its 1995 budget to handle water leakage in the Kingdom.

Current networks currently lose 53 per cent of the total amount of water in the greater Amman area alone due to leakage; the new networks would reduce the amount of lost water to 10 per cent, the minister said. He noted that the work on the Amman networks is expected to commence by the start of 1995.

Areas to be included in the first phase of the Amman plan include Jebel Luweibeh, Jebel Hussein, Jofeh Hashimi, Ashrafieh, Marka

and Wadi Haddadeh districts, the minister said.

The minister referred to a number of areas in the country which are not yet served by sewage systems. Several citizens have been paying fees for sewage services between 1964 and 1984 even though they are not linked to Jordan's sewage system.

He said that payments for these citizens were at the rate of three per cent calculated according to the amount of water consumed by each household during that period.

These payments, he said, would be retained as credit at the water authority until they are connected to the system.

Dr. Irsheidat also said the ministry is finalising arrangements for a central unit to receive public complaints about water-related issues.

Jordan to join convention to prevent sea pollution

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan has decided to join the convention for the prevention of sea pollution, in accordance with a decision taken Saturday by the Council of Ministers. The convention was endorsed by the United Nations in 1983.

Under the terms of the convention each member country trains cadres to protect marine environments and pledges to provide special equipment to deal with the oil spills in sea waters.

He also encourages scientific research programmes dealing with the clean-up and disposal of oil spills.

Under the terms of the convention each member nation also provides suitable seaport installations to clean spills.

Under Jordanian and international laws, vessels are not allowed to dump any kind of waste at the Aqaba port at any time.

The Council of Ministers

which met under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali also announced that Jordan will take part in the 53rd supervisory council meeting for the Palestine refugees, due to convene in Cairo by the middle of January. The meeting, which is expected to last one week, is sponsored by the Arab League and is expected to discuss services for the Palestinian refugees and the annual budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

During an ordinary session, the Council of Ministers decided to form a Jordanian delegation led by the head of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Ahmad Jweiber to travel to Malaysia during the first week of January to exchange documents ratifying an air transport agreement between Malaysia and Jordan.

An initial agreement on

the air transport between the two countries was reached during a recent visit to Jordan by the Malaysian prime minister.

The Cabinet gave consent for Jordan to attend a regional conference of national committees involved in electric power generation. The meeting, which is due to be held in Cairo between Jan. 20-25 is expected to be attended by a team from the Jordan Electricity Authority (JEA) which will submit four working papers.

The Cairo meeting should pave the ground for the first international conference on electric power generation commissions to be held in Paris within the coming year. The Council of Ministers approved the secondment of Dr. Janer Mirza, director of the Blood Bank, to serve with the World Health Organisation (WHO) for one month in Pakistan.

Government panel finds food additive testing valid

Islamic council questions implementation of food regulations

By Samir Barhoum

Special to the Jordan Times
AMMAN — According to a government committee, all additives to bread, potato chips, cakes, pastries and other foodstuffs undergo strict tests to ensure that they conform to Jordanian and international standards and specifications.

The committee, comprising representatives of the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Ministry of Health and the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) and set up to investigate a statement issued Oct. 8 by the Council of Islamic Organisations and Societies in Jordan, emphasised that no substances can be added to foodstuffs without being tested by the concerned authorities to make sure they conform to internationally recognised standards and specifications and to prove they are fit for human consumption.

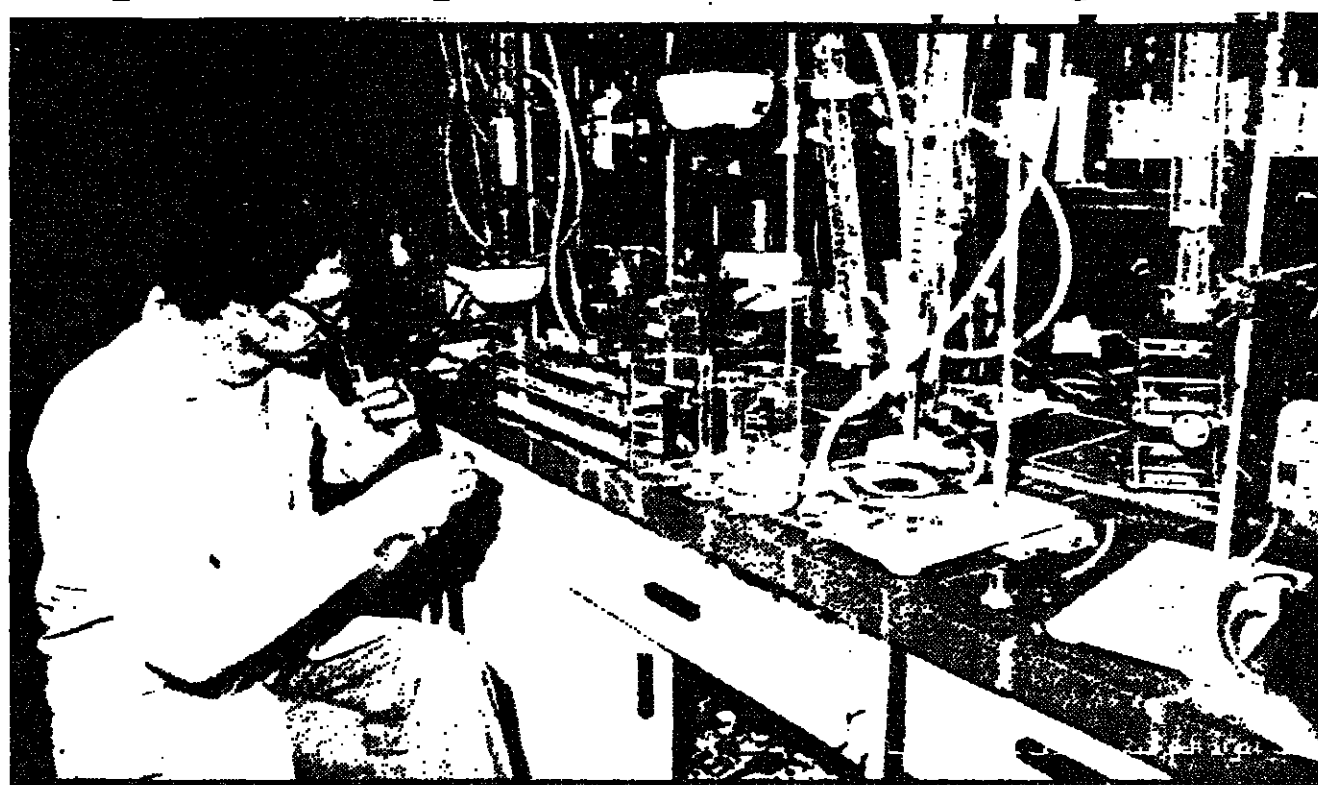
The council in October issued a statement in which it said dyes and other substances were being added to food stuffs beyond allowed standards to make them tempting to consumers.

In addition, the council said farmers were also using chemical materials, including pesticides and hormones, which might cause serious diseases, especially to children.

The government committee denied these charges in a reply sent to the council. It said that the Ministry of Agriculture also plays a major role in testing and analysing samples of locally-produced and imported agricultural produce at its pesticides laboratories.

In case of any violations, the statement said, "the ministry takes the necessary measures to protect the health of citizens."

Director of the RSS's Chemical Industries Department Saleh Suradi said all additives to food stuffs



A food testing laboratory at the Royal Scientific Society (file photo)

are usually tested by all concerned parties and should conform to specifications set by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

He said the RSS conducts only part of the work carried out by the ministries of agriculture and health in that regard, underlining that each has its own role to play.

"We are only an advisory party testing samples sent to us by the concerned ministries and the Customs Department," Dr. Suradi told the Jordan Times.

Abdul Latif Subeichi, secretary general of the council which includes 101 Islamic societies and centres around the Kingdom, said the council was prompted to issue its statement in October following many complaints by citizens.

Dr. Subeichi said the committee's reply, received by

mail Saturday, was unrealistic. "They say they have specifications and standards, but the question is are these specifications and standards followed on the ground?" he asked.

He said the council, an independent body set up in 1974, was not satisfied with the committee's reply and stressed that he will raise the issue again with the concerned authorities.

Despite the affirmations by the authorities that standards are strictly observed by bakeries, confectionaries and foodstuff plants, people still complain of the chemical substances they taste in bread, meat and more importantly potato chips which are consumed by children in large quantities, Dr. Subeichi charged.

He said he feared that such substances added to foodstuffs, including those added to bread to make it

look and taste better, might be causing cancer.

"Five years ago, we stirred the same issue, and a major campaign was taken by the government to investigate it. Now we intend to do the same," said Dr. Subeichi.

Meanwhile, Akhbar Al Usbou weekly Saturday reported that the Health Department in Zarqa has over the past seven weeks shut down five unlicensed factories that were producing candy.

No official was available at the Ministry of Health and the Zarqa Health Department Saturday afternoon for comment, although sources at the Zarqa department confirmed the story.

Akhbar Al Usbou said the unlicensed factories were using banned colouring materials, adding that the owners of the factories

were referred to court.

It quoted health ministry officials as saying that the closure of the unlicensed factories does not mean that licensed ones do not violate specifications. Nevertheless, the sources told the weekly that the licensed factories commit fewer violations.

The sources told the weekly that several unlicensed food processing factories operating in various parts of the Kingdom were recently shut down without the issuance of any public announcement to preserve the reputation of national industries.

The sources said the products of these plants are usually marketed in "popular or remote areas."

An official source at the ministry said an average of one unlicensed factory is shut down by the ministry every month.

Still no clues to factory explosion

By Rana Hussein

Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Investigations were under way Saturday to determine the cause of an oven explosion in a smelting factory near Marka Airport that caused the death of two people and injury to four others, police and Civil Defence Department (CDD) sources said.

A CDD official told the Jordan Times Saturday that a committee has been formed to investigate what caused the industrial oven to explode late Thursday night.

"We still have no idea of what might have caused the oven to explode, but we took samples from it for examination," the official said.

Two employees standing near the oven were killed instantly from the blast that rocked the factory, and four others were listed in fair condition, he added.

He said the factory was not damaged because the oven was placed in an insulated room to protect the rest of the building in case

of an explosion.

All six casualties were taken to Al Bashir Hospital in Amman, said the official. The four employees who sustained minor burns from the explosion were listed in good to fair condition.

According to the official, several circumstances may have caused the blast.

"It is possible that an increase in temperatures might have caused the explosion, or that gas collected in a tight area and caused an increase in pressure," he said.

As of Saturday evening, police had still not determined the cause of the explosion.

Meanwhile, the CDD responded to 657 emergencies last week in which 31 persons were killed.

CDD Public Director Captain Farid Share' said that most of the casualties reported were the result of suffocation or burns caused by careless use of kerosene or gas heaters.

Capt. Share' said that of the 31 reported deaths, six were suffocation and burn-related accidents.

Another year folds

(Continued from page 7)

13 — Islamic summit opens in Morocco, Jordan demands a resolution on Jerusalem that supports its custodianship of holy Muslim sites in the city.

17 — OIC resolution was void of any mention of Jordan's role.

18 — Government raises pension of military, civil retirees.

21 — Commission presents high-incentive draft law to encourage investments.

22 — Mufti of Saudi Arabia Abdul Aziz Ben Baz says peace with Israel is possible.

21 — State Security Court sentences 11 Muslim fundamentalists to death on terrorist charges including bomb attacks on cinemas.

23 — Prince Ali Ben Ali

Hussein celebrates his 19th birthday

— Four Algerian gunmen seize French airliner with 283 on board.

26 — Lower House adopts draft budget with 52-22 vote.

— Israeli parliament adopts a law aimed at preventing official PLO activities in Jerusalem.

27 — 1994 census shows that 4,095,579 people live in Kingdom.

— Eleven opposition groups accuse government of violating freedoms.

— King heads for Austria for check-ups on ear problem.

— Four priests killed in Algeria as France probes hijack.

28 — Syrian, Egyptian and Saudi leaders hold mini-summit in Egypt.



The Dibbin Woods in the Jerash district (file photo)

Groups prepare for Arbor Day

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan will celebrate Arbor Day on Jan. 15, with tree-planting ceremonies throughout the country.

Issa Shahin, member of the administrative board of the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN), said in a statement Saturday that the society, in collaboration with other groups, is preparing for these celebrations as part of the national effort to green the Kingdom by the year 2000.

Mousa Abbadi, head of the Ministry of Agriculture's Afforestation Department, told the Jordan Times Saturday that the main celebration this year would be held at Wadi Araba, where Jordan and Israel signed a peace

treaty on Oct. 26, 1994.

He said in that celebration alone at least 15,000 saplings of forest trees will be planted to form the nucleus of the proposed peace park in Wadi Araba just north of Aqaba.

The Ministry of Agriculture's 12 nurseries this year produced seven million forest tree saplings which are being distributed to the public, schools, organisations and farmers to be planted during the current agricultural season.

According to Mr. Shahin of the RSCN, each year the society plants a new forest in a different location to help out in greening the country.

The RSCN also has a duty to supervise and control the cultivation of trees and pre-

vent any unnecessary chopping down of trees.

At present, he said, the RSCN is undertaking the project of re-creating a forest at Al Jweideh, south of Amman, which was destroyed by fire three years ago.

In 1994 the Abdul Hameed Sharaf Forest near the Queen Alia International Airport Highway was also severely damaged by fire. Mr. Shahin said.

He added that the RSCN has planted 1,500 forest trees in the Abdul Hameed Sharaf Forest.

Both Mr. Abbadi and Mr. Shahin appealed to the public to participate in this season's tree-planting activities in marking Arbor Day.

Minister says 31,800 families live in absolute poverty

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan has 31,800 families described as living in absolute poverty, and their monthly income does not exceed JD60, according to minister of social development Mohammad Sqour.

Addressing a press conference Saturday, the minister said that all these families receive free medical treatment and some assistance from the National Aid Fund, (NAF) the Development and Employment Fund (DEF) and the Zakat Fund amounting to JD60 per month.

In 1992, families living in absolute poverty accounted for 6.6 per cent of the total

number of the Kingdom's families, but the figure dropped to 4.5 per cent by the end of 1994, said the minister.

Families living at the poverty line with monthly incomes not exceeding JD 120, are estimated to number 107,800. These families also receive aid from the aforementioned funds.

Referring to the number of families which receive assistance from the National Aid Fund, Dr. Sqour said they were estimated at 37,937.

He said local and foreign charitable organisations are providing financial and in-kind assistance to 12,500 families.



Mohammad Sqour

WHAT'S GOING ON

CHRISTMAS DISPLAY

★ Bani Hamida Christmas Display with a variety of small gift items at Bani Hamida House, Jabal Amman, First Circle, Rainbow Street.

EXHIBITIONS

★ Exhibition of oil paintings by Mahmoud Mase at the Phoenix Gallery for Culture and Art.
★ Plastic art exhibition by Leila Kawash at

the Royal Cultural Centre.

★ Exhibition of works by Mahamad Obaldi at Darat Al Fumma. Also showing an exhibition of portraits by Fahrelnissa Zeid and the exhibition of contemporary Arab artists.

★ Exhibition of paintings by Ismail and Tammam Shammout at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation.

★ Exhibition by artists Latif Al Khateeb and Muhy Khaleefa at the Housing Bank Gallery.

★ Exhibition at Mona Saudi's Studio, Abdou Village — Tel.: 829700 until Dec. 31st, 1994.

Jordan Times
Tel: 667171

Cambodia leaders urge rebels to defect before amnesty ends

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Cambodia's co-premiers have stepped-up psychological pressure on the Khmer Rouge by issuing a "final" appeal to the guerrillas to defect before an amnesty expires next month.

"The royal government would like to appeal again, and this can be considered the final time, for officers, soldiers and people who live under the Khmer Rouge" to defect, said Cambodia's co-premiers in a statement Saturday.

"The amnesty given to the Khmer Rouge will no longer be effective from Jan. 15, 1995," said the statement, which was signed by Co-Premiers Prince Norodom Ranariddh and Hun Sen.

It came as the Khmer Rouge Saturday called on Cambodian King Norodom Sihanouk to head a government of national reconciliation.

In a New Year radio message monitored in Bangkok Khieu Samphan, the nominal leader of the guerrilla group said the only way to solve Cambodia's problems and rebuild the shattered country was to "unite all the national groups... and political figures" under a government headed by the king.

The message, four days before the scheduled return of King Sihanouk to Cambodia after medical treatment in China, appears as another attempt by the group to break its isolation and obtain a legitimate role in the country's affairs.

Previously the guerrillas had called for the overthrow of the government which was elected last year, although the traditional belligerence has not been apparent in recent radio broadcasts, observers said.

The Khmer Rouge dismissed as "psychological warfare" reports by Phnom Penh of a drop in the number of guerrillas because of the amnesty offer.

This latest appeal to the guerrillas comes amidst reports of already mass defections from the Khmer Rouge particularly in the northwest province of Siem Reap.

More than 400 guerrillas in the province have defected over the past two weeks, the government said Thursday. Prince Ranariddh described the defections as showing the government's "policy of national reconciliation is working."

Almost a thousand guerrillas have changed sides in the past two months in Siem Reap, and the notorious Khmer Rouge 412th division — believed responsible for the mass burning of villages — has been wiped out by defections, said the government.

The governor of the province told AFP the defections were due to military pressure on the guerrillas for more than a month, which cut off their supply lines.

Despite the strong language in this latest appeal the government has not discounted the possibility of extending the amnesty.

In July Cambodia's parliament formally outlawed the guerrilla group but shortly afterwards introduced a six-month amnesty for all who defected to the government side except Pol Pot and other top leaders.

Almost 3,000 guerrilla fighters have taken advantage of this amnesty and defected since July said the

government although there has been no independent confirmation of these figures.

Government officials describe the general amnesty as having been "very effective" and Cambodia's co-premiers said in total more than 5,000 fighters have defected in the past 12 months.

The Khmer Rouge have been a thorn in the government's side since they boycotted the May 1993 U.N.-sponsored elections which aimed to restore democracy and stability in Cambodia after decades of civil war.

So far the guerrillas have foiled government attempts to crush them militarily and continue to launch hit and run attacks in Cambodia's countryside.

During the past 12 months the Khmer Rouge have further tarnished Cambodia's image by kidnapping and brutally killing several foreign hostages.

King Sihanouk confirmed in Beijing Friday that he would return to Cambodia next week after treatment here for cancer succeeded in eradicating all traces of the disease.



FLOODS IN FRANCE: French inhabitants of Louvigny, northwestern France, push a canoe to a safe haven to prevent it from drifting away with the waters of the Orne River which overflowed its banks rapidly following heavy rainfalls over the region (AFP photo)

Quake rocks southern China; 50 injured

BEIJING (R) — China's second earthquake in two days rocked the south coast Saturday, injuring about 50 people, some of them schoolchildren hurt in a stampede, officials said.

The earthquake, measuring 6.1 on the Richter Scale, was centered in the Gulf of Tonkin in the South China Sea and struck at 10:57 a.m. (0257 GMT), officials said.

No one was killed according to initial reports, she said.

The earthquake was felt in Beihai and in Haikou, capital of the island province of Hainan, as well as Zhanjiang, Nanning, Guangzhou and Sanya, the state Seismological Bureau said.

Most of the injured were in the port of Qinzhou, where at least 19 schoolchildren were hurt in a stampede as they rushed out of their classrooms, the official said.

She said another 30 people had been injured in various places across the province, including one person who jumped out of a second floor window.

Several farmhouses collapsed but there were no reports of damage to larger buildings, she said. Reports were still awaited from the island of Weizhou in the Gulf of Tonkin.

They were also areas to which labour could be shifted as many firms slumped down as part of competitive restructuring, he said.

"The catch phrase this year will be 'from reform to creation'," Mr. Murayama said.

"This government aims to create a new-style economy with the emphasis on a smooth transition without unemployment."

Looking ahead to the 50th anniversary of Japan's World War II surrender, Mr. Murayama said it was a time the country should use to deal with leftover problems from the conflict.

"It is Japan's own issue to mark the anniversary with concrete steps on various issues left from the war," he said.

One outstanding problem is Tokyo's refusal to directly compensate "comfort women" — Asian and Dutch women who were forced to work as sex slaves for Japanese soldiers.

Commenting on the future of his six-month-old government, Mr. Murayama ruled out a general election for the crucial lower house in 1995, saying the nation would have two other opportunities to make its feelings known during local elections in April

Murayama makes reform a 1995 priority

TOKYO (R) — Prime Minister Tomichi Murayama Sunday singled out restructuring of the Japanese economy as his priority for 1995 and hinted at action on some lingering issues from World War II.

Vowing to create a "new style economy," Mr. Murayama said the challenge was to sustain Japan's economic recovery from four years of recession without suffering the pain of more unemployment.

He ruled out a general election or cabinet reshuffle in 1995, saying the country could not afford a political vacuum when all efforts were needed to keep the economy on track.

"This government aims first to act on administrative reform, including decentralisation of power, deregulation and streamlining public corporations," Mr. Murayama said in a New Year address to his government's plans for 1995.

He pledged to lift tight bureaucratic control of standards and certification, and to close the huge gap between foreign and Japanese consumer prices.

Mr. Murayama forecast communications and information technology as industries important to Japan's future.

and upper house elections in July.

"The slowly recovering economy means we have no room for a political vacuum," he said.

He brushed aside suggestions of a damaging split in his own Socialist Party if rightwingers carry out threats to quit and form a new centre-left "Liberal Party," saying he was convinced unity would be maintained.

A split would be a serious blow to his party, whose awkward coalition with the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and smaller allies in the Sakegake Party commands a 35-seat majority in the 511-member lower house.

Looking ahead to a meeting next week in Washington with President Bill Clinton, Mr. Murayama said he would discuss how Japan, the United States and South Korea would fund a light-water nuclear reactor for North Korea.

In exchange, Pyongyang would scrap its graphite-based reactors, which produce weapons-grade plutonium.

"But more important is defining the long-term bilateral ties with the United States, including how both countries should help bring about a peaceful security arrangement for the Asia-Pacific region," Mr. Murayama said.

Zapatistas declare truce in Mexico

SAN CRISTOBAL, Mexico (AFP) — The Zapatista National Liberation Army declared a six-day truce Friday in the southern state of Chiapas as of Jan. 1 and said it was prepared to hold peace talks with the government.

In a statement issued by Zapatista headquarters, the rebels announced the "suspension of all military operations between Jan. 1 and 6" during which they vowed not to launch attacks against government troop positions.

Another statement signed by the Zapatistas' charismatic leader, who calls himself Subcomandante Marcos, said the truce was necessary to "create conditions for a lasting peace that would allow a new truthful, respectful and serious dialogue."

The truce coincided with the first anniversary of the Zapatistas' New Year's Day uprising against the government in which hundreds were killed in fighting with army troops.

It followed a request Friday by President Ernesto Zedillo to the Defence Ministry to halt operations and freeze the troop presence in Chiapas.

The Zapatistas earlier this month broke an 11-month ceasefire reaching following the Jan. 1 uprising and said they would resume their battle for better living conditions and democratic reform in the impoverished Mexican region.

The rebels said the ceasefire was invalidated when the candidate of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party won the gubernatorial race in Chiapas, but a clash was averted when Mr. Zedillo bowed to a key Zapatista demand and announced that a nine-member committee headed by a local bishop would mediate the conflict.

Despite that breakthrough, Samuel Ruiz, the Roman Catholic Bishop of San Cristobal and head of the National Mediation Committee, decided Friday to continue his hunger strike, now in its 11th day.

Bishop Ruiz, 70, a key mediator in talks between the government and the Zapatistas earlier this year, said he would end his hunger strike when a lasting settlement had been reached.

Army troops began withdrawing from eight positions Thursday and lifting road blockades after having pulled out of the two towns of San Quintin and Monte Libano earlier in the week.

The move was to "attain a climate of military détente that will open the door to a durable truce and to a resumption of the dialogue," officials said.

Agriculture Minister Miguel Limon moved to help Chiapas' poor peasants by announcing that the government's programme for land distribution would be stepped up, a decision that also met a key Zapatista demand for land reform.

He also acknowledged that the plight of Chiapas' peasant farmers needed to be addressed, stating that agricultural production in the state could not be "built on servitude and inadmissible slavehood."

The easing of tensions came ahead of the first anniversary of the New Year's Day uprising in Chiapas,

2 die, 4 hurt in China fire

BEIJING (R) — Fire swept through a ballroom in the central Chinese city of Nanjing, killing two people and seriously injuring four, and destroying the building, the Xinhua News Agency said Saturday.

The latest blaze in China's deadliest year for fires erupted just after midnight Thursday as the ballroom was about to close and only three customers and 15 workers were still in the third-floor dance hall, it said.

The fire killed the ballroom manager and a security guard and seriously injured four others while several were slightly hurt, it said.

The 700 square metre (7,500 square foot), three-storey building was ruined and damage was estimated at six million yuan (\$709,000).

The fire brigade took three hours to extinguish the blaze because the building was made of brick and wood, decorated with highly inflammable materials and a high wind fanned the flames, it said.

The Jiangsu provincial government has ordered an immediate investigation into the cause of the blaze.

Disastrous fires across China killed more people and caused more costly property losses than in any other year on record, a fire department official said Saturday.



Brazilian President-elect Fernando Henrique Cardoso (right) embraces Edeus Araujo do Nascimento, 'Pele,' during a meeting in Brazil. The soccer legend has been nominated by Cardoso to be Special Minister of Sports in his new government. Cardoso will be inaugurated on Jan. 1 (AFP photo)

Brazil's Cardoso takes power Sunday

BRASILIA (R) — Free-market champion Fernando Henrique Cardoso becomes president New Year's Day amid hopes Brazil can end the chronic inflation and shaky government it has had since emerging from a military dictatorship ten years ago.

Mr. Cardoso, 63, a Social Democrat and one of Brazil's most respected intellectuals, will be sworn in Sunday afternoon. He succeeds Itamar Franco as head of Latin America's biggest nation.

The festivities include a \$450,000 open-air pop concert in front of the presidential palace expected to attract tens of thousands of partygoers, and a black-tie reception for 3,000 guests. Ten heads of state, mostly from Latin America, have said they would attend.

He has vowed to follow the example of regional neighbours Argentina and Mexico in opening up Brazil's economy, among the 10 biggest in the world, to trade and foreign investment.

Key among his plans are an ambitious privatisation programme and pushing tax and budget reforms through Congress.

Mr. Cardoso also wants to give spendthrift cities and states more responsibility for social services and taxes.

But economic changes are just the basis for solving such grim problems as crime, gross human rights violations and chronic hunger.

Brazil has one of the worst distributions of income in the world, with 32 million of its 150 million people living in absolute poverty. Leprosy is on the rise and teachers paid as little as \$150 a month are increasingly abandoning classrooms.

"We have to face the fact that Brazil is not an underdeveloped country. The great Achilles heel of Brazil is social injustice," he said in a recent interview.

"I have said all the time that I wanted to mark a path. Brazil needs a direction pointed out."

Brazil has suffered from political instability since 21 years of military rule ended in 1985. One president — Tancredino Neves, died before taking office. Mr. Franco, as vice president, took over when Fernando Collor quit in a corruption scandal two years ago.

Mr. Cardoso won October elections with 54 per cent of the vote — twice as much as his closest opponent — on the strength of an anti-inflation plan he designed while Mr. Franco's economy minister.

Under the six-month-old programme, called the real plan for its dollar-backed currency, monthly inflation has dropped from 50 per cent to two per cent. Brazil's economy also has boomed, with gross domestic product expected to grow up to five per cent in 1994.

Mr. Cardoso faces his greatest challenge in Congress, where he has fashioned an unwieldy four-party coalition. Congress features 19 political parties, occasional scandals and traditionally is devoted more to regional bosses and personal interests than solving urgent national problems.

An internationally respected sociologist who went into exile during military rule, Mr. Cardoso was a Sao Paulo senator until Mr. Franco tapped him to be foreign minister and then became economy minister in 1993.

Gingrich declines controversial \$4.5m book advance

ATLANTA (R) — Bowing to criticism from political opponents and supporters, House speaker-to-be Newt Gingrich said he is turning down a \$4.5 million advance on two books.

He told a news conference the controversial deal would have been used by critics of the Republican programme in the new Congress taking office on Jan. 4.

Instead of accepting the offer from HarperCollins publishers of a \$4.5 million advance, Mr. Gingrich said in a letter to his Republican colleagues he would take only a \$1 advance plus royalties on sales.

Mr. Gingrich defended the deal as ethical but said that in the last week he and his wife Marianne had had time to consider "the unique moment in time" when changes could be made in Washington and the country.

"Therefore it is clear that this is not the time to take any steps which could be seen as weakening our commitment to the Contract with America (the House Republican programme) and our focus on reestablishing a House and legislative branch worthy of the American people's respect," the letter said.

Mr. Gingrich quoted "an older precinct committeeman in Lancaster, Pennsylvania" as telling Republican Representative Bob Walker, "tell our new speaker we all worked for this victory and he should not take advantage of our efforts."

"That committeeman was right," Mr. Gingrich said.

He told reporters that this comment had been the deciding factor in rejecting the book advance.



Rep. Newt Gingrich, the incoming speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, explains in Marietta, Georgia, that he will not accept a \$4.5-million book advance. Mr. Gingrich, who has come under attack by both Republicans and Democrats because of the deal, announced he will take a \$1 advance and royalties on book sales instead (AFP photo)

"I realised that we really owed it to every person who was on our team to say to them we don't want anyone at any level to think we're taking any advantage," he said.

House Democratic whip David Bonior, Mr. Gingrich's harshest critic, had accused Mr. Gingrich of arrogance and sought to suggest there was a link between the deal and a dispute between publisher Rupert Murdoch, owner of HarperCollins, and the Federal Communications Commission.

Some criticism focused particularly on reports that Mr. Murdoch's Fox TV network would seek congressional passage of a law ending a current U.S. prohibition against foreign ownership.

While Mr. Murdoch is a former Australian citizen and now a naturalised American, his Australian company owns part of Fox TV.

Mr. Murdoch denied knowing about the Gingrich deal before it was made.

Mr. Bonior told reporters following Mr. Gingrich's announcement that the new speaker had "finally got the message" from an outraged public.

But the deal had also aroused concern among Republicans.

Senate Republican leader Bob Dole told reporters Thursday: "Every time we're on a talk show, I assume we'll be asked about the book deal. It is of some concern to a lot of people."

In a statement Friday, Sen. Dole commended Mr. Gingrich, saying his action paved the way for important work ahead.

"This should also silence his political opponents," Sen. Dole said. "I fully expect he will be a best-selling author and I look forward to reading his books."

Mr. Gingrich defended the book deal as perfectly ethical and said it would have been offered in an auction between publishing houses in which two had offered more than \$4 million.

HarperCollins had proposed a two-book package including one entitled To Renew America that he had been working on.

Father Christmas loses invalidity payments

LONDON (R) — Father Christmas has lost his invalidity payments in Britain after a hectic festive season. Osmond Baker, who retired from his job as a farm manager earlier this year with a heart complaint, wrote to advise social security officials that he had taken a temporary job as Santa Claus handing out Christmas toys to children. That led to his invalidity benefits being stopped. "When we had written notification from him, it included a statement from his doctor saying he did not need to refrain from work," said benefit officer Edward Phillips from the western English county of Somerset. "We were obliged to act on that information."

Michael Jackson 'plagiarised Italian song'

ROME (AFP) — U.S. singer Michael Jackson's scandal-ravaged year ended on another sour note Friday when a court here ruled that he had plagiarised an Italian song for one of the tracks on his 1991 album Dangerous. Judge Domenico Bonaccorsi ruled that Jackson had lifted parts of Italian singer Al Bano's song "I cigni di Balak" (The Swans Of Balaka) and put them into his own "Will You Be There." The Italian song was distributed in the United States from 1989 and had clearly been copied by Jackson, Judge Bonaccorsi said. The ruling means that Dangerous must immediately be pulled from the shelves of all record stores in Italy, and broadcast or performing "Will You Be There" will be banned. Musicologist Luciano Chailly told the court that of the 40 notes that make up "I cigni di Balak," 37 had been copied note for note by Jackson. "Apart from the differences in lyrics, the two songs appear absolutely identical," Mr. Chailly said. The ruling ends a two-year court battle between Bano and Jackson. The two sides now have 120 days to come to a settlement. Jackson has already been plagued by allegations of child abuse and by media carping that his marriage to Elvis Presley's daughter Lisa Marie is a sham.

Post-war Japan richer, but no happier — survey

TOKYO (R) — The Japanese are discovering that money cannot buy you happiness. According to a poll released Saturday, the most widely perceived change in the 50 years since the end of World War II is that the country has become richer, but only a handful said it had become happier. The Mainichi Shimbun surveyed 4,000 people earlier this month to see how the Japanese perceive the social changes of the last half-century. Pollsters were asked to choose the two most important out of 10 descriptions of social change. Of the 68 per cent who responded, 53 per cent thought Japan had transformed from a poor nation into a rich one, and 46 per cent said it had ceased to be thrifty. However, less than 3 per cent of the respondents thought it had become a happier nation, and 15 per cent said Japan had transformed itself from a warm society to a cold-hearted one.

Hong Kong adds a 2 to its phone numbers

HONG KONG (AFP) — Hong Kong's telephone and fax numbers will grow by a digit on Sunday when "2" will be added at the beginning of all numbers, Hong Kong Telecom reminded its customers Saturday. For example, a number that is currently 888-2888 — Hong Kong Telecom's main line — will become 2888-2888. Hong Kong's international direct dialing code of 852 will remain unchanged, as will pager and mobile telephone numbers. The change is being made to enable Hong Kong Telecom, a listed unit of Britain's Cable and Wireless Plc, to handle the territory's growing demand for telephone-related services. "Lucky" phone numbers are to be auctioned off, the Hong Kong media reported. The digit 8 has the same sound in Cantonese as "wealth" or "prosperity," and is often prized. On the other hand, the number 4 is close in sound to "death" and is often avoided by the superstitious.

We have defeated 'forces of evil' — Rwanda leader

KIGALI (Agencies) — Rwanda's President Pasteur Bizimungu said his compatriots had defeated the "forces of evil" in a message to close a year that saw more than 500,000 people killed in a genocidal civil war.

"The year 1994 was a year of distress, anguish and pain for Rwandans," Mr. Bizimungu said, according to Radio Rwanda Saturday. "Rwanda was nevertheless once again a country where milk and honey flowed."

"But we must congratulate ourselves on the fact that we have been able to defeat the forces of evil," the president added in an address Friday to members of the coalition government and the diplomatic corps.

Mr. Bizimungu and his government colleagues planned to spend New Year's Eve with orphaned and unaccompanied children in different parts of the central African country, where almost 150,000 youngsters are without families, according to official estimates.

The president, a member of the Hutu majority ethnic group, was installed after rebels of the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) seized control of the capital Kigali in July, following three months of slaughter.

The new authorities have blamed Hutu extremists and former government troops for unleashing the genocide of minority Tutsis after former President Juvenal Habyarimana was killed in a suspected rocket attack on his plane in April.

The U.N. Security Council has moved to set up a war crimes tribunal for Rwanda. Hutu extremist militiamen killed 10 villagers who had refused to follow them into exile in Tanzania in an attack in southeastern Rwanda, state-run Rwandan Radio said.

The radio, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation, on Friday night quoted reports from the southeastern town of Kibungo saying nine members of the ousted former government's Interhamwe militia attacked people in Kigarama village near Akagera Park, which borders on Tanzania.

It said 10 people including women and children were killed and three others were seriously wounded in two separate attacks after villagers refused to follow them into northwest Tanzania.

Hutu militiamen based in border areas and refugee camps are intimidating refugees against returning home in a campaign to deprive the government in the capital of Kigali of any Hutus to govern.

More than one million refugees, virtually all Hutus, remain outside Rwanda in camps in Tanzania, Zaire and Burundi despite a campaign by the government and aid agencies to help them return.

U.S. helicopter pilot arrives home in Florida

MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, Florida (R) — U.S. army helicopter pilot Bobby Hall came home to Florida Friday night after being held for nearly two weeks by North Korea.

"It's great to be back home. I'm looking forward to some family time," Officer Hall, his voice breaking with emotion, said after arriving at MacDill Air Force Base near Tampa, Florida.

The chief warrant officer landed at MacDill around 11:15 p.m. (0415 GMT Saturday) and got off the plane a few minutes later. After an emotional reunion with family members, he made a brief statement.



Chief Warrant Officer Bobby Hall (front) surrounded by family members makes a brief statement after his arrival at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida. Officer Hall was held captive for 13 days in North Korea after his helicopter crashed during a training mission (AFP photo).

He was expected to continue on to his hometown of Brooksville, about 40 miles (70-km) north of Tampa, ending a journey that began earlier Friday in Seoul, South Korea.

In his statement, Officer Hall expressed condolences to the family of fellow pilot Chief Warrant Officer David Hilemon, who was killed in the Dec. 17 crash of their helicopter in Communist North Korea.

"I really don't know how we wound up across the DMZ," Officer Hall said at MacDill, referring to the demilitarized zone separating North and South Korea. He said the first indication he had that anything was wrong was an explosion outside the aircraft.

He said he had been very well treated during his 12 days of captivity, adding that the North Koreans "were very concerned about my well-being."

North Korea said the helicopter was on a spy mission, but the United States said the aircraft was on a routine mission and had accidentally strayed into North Korean airspace before going down.

Officer Hall thanked his family and the people of Brooksville for their support, saying, "you are really a bunch of great people."

The United States and North Korea failed to agree on a format for future talks to prevent a repeat of the recent downing of the U.S. helicopter in North Korea, the top State Department East Asia expert said Friday.

The two countries left the question vague in an agreement which led to the release Friday of Officer Hall, said Winston Lord, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs.

"Neither side would agree to the other's position, so we resorted to creative ambiguity," Mr. Lord said in a telephone interview. "We would have preferred a more precise formulation but it was not possible to agree on that."

Mr. Lord also said that with Officer Hall now released, the United States planned to go ahead on schedule with a delivery of heavy oil to North Korea under an October agreement that froze Pyongyang's nuclear programme.

In an understanding with Pyongyang concerning terms for the release of Officer Hall whose helicopter was downed on Dec. 17 just inside North Korea, the United States agreed to "contacts in an appropriate forum" to prevent such incidents in future.

Mr. Lord said the United States insisted this should be within the Military Armistice Commission (MAC), which oversees the armistice that ended the 1950-53 Korean War, but North Korea was demanding purely bilateral contacts.

At issue is North Korea's desire to establish links with the United States that bypass South Korea. At the MAC, North Korean officers nominally meet the United Nations Command which includes South Korea as well as U.S. officers.

Mr. Lord said no specific meetings had been scheduled to clear up the dispute. "We would like to meet at some stage, but how soon will depend on North Korean reasonableness," he said.

He made clear that — as in the past — such meetings need not always include South Korean representatives, but that U.S. officers would be taking part "using the U.N. hat." MAC meetings take place at Panmunjom on the North-South border.

U.S. leaders have maintained that no concessions were made to North Korea over Officer Hall's release, negotiated in Pyongyang by Mr. Lord's deputy Thomas Hubbard. In the deal, the United States expressed "sincere regret" over the helicopter incident.

Mr. Lord said the nuclear agreement, under which Pyongyang halted nuclear activities in return for oil supplies and the eventual provision of modern nuclear reactors whose fuel cannot be diverted to make weapons, was now back on course.

He said this included the first shipment of oil supplies, due to be delivered to North Korea by Jan. 21.

"That is our plan now, unless something comes up that we don't expect," Mr. Lord said.

"The atmosphere would have been seriously prejudiced if (Hall's) detention had gone on much longer," he said. "But the issue was solved, I think, before the atmosphere soured."

Washington never openly threatened to hold back the delivery, but some members of Congress warned that they would seek to block it if Officer Hall was not freed.

The U.S. official also said he believed North Korea had "de facto" accepted the U.S. argument that the helicopter intrusion was due to a navigational error.

He said this was suggested both by the decision to release Officer Hall and by the fact that no explicit admission of espionage was contained in a "confession" attributed to the U.S. pilot that was published Wednesday by North Korean media.

While the North Koreans had not openly endorsed the U.S. explanation, "I think they are fairly convinced it was an accident," Mr. Lord said.

Seoul wary about U.S.- North Korea contacts

SEOUL (R) — South Korea, keeping a wary eye on warming ties between the United States and North Korea, said Saturday it would stop Pyongyang's bid to drive a wedge between Seoul and Washington.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman said the North had ruled out South Korea's involvement in negotiations on the release of U.S. army pilot Bobby Hall, whose helicopter went down just north of the tense border bisecting the Korean peninsula.

(South) Korea and the United States will mobilize all means to save off North Korea's intention to damage Seoul-Washington relations and to draw the United States into political negotiations with Pyongyang," he said.

He said the Seoul government had asked Washington not to be involved in the issue of repatriating North Korean prisoners of war held in the South.

In announcing Officer Hall's release from 13 days of captivity Friday, North Korea radio said the United States agreed to "our demand to give necessary cooperation so that unconverted prisoners of war (North Korean soldiers held by South Korea) can be returned home quickly."

U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Hubbard, who negotiated Officer Hall's release, told a news conference in Seoul Friday that the issue of POWs was a matter to be discussed between the two Koreas.

The Seoul Foreign Ministry spokesman said the issue is "strictly an internal matter that has to be dealt with by our constitution and within our sovereignty."

The North has repeatedly demanded that the South repatriate two North Koreans held for spying during the 1950-53 Korean War.

Unification Ministry officials said Kim In-Suh and Han Se-Hwan had served prison terms for spying during the war and thereafter for refusing to convert from communism.

The two were released from jail in 1989. It was not known whether the two, classified as North Korean "war partisans," want to return to the North but they would need permission from the Seoul government to do so.

In a humanitarian move South Korea last year repatriated an ailing 77-year-old North Korean "war partisan," Li In-Mo. He was captured during the Korean War and jailed until 1988.

Relations between the United States and North Korea had improved dramatically following an October agreement under which Pyongyang agreed to freeze its nuclear programme in return for new nuclear power facilities that would almost eliminate the possibility of it producing weapons-grade plutonium.

Seoul government officials have expressed concerns that Washington may bypass its long-time ally and deal directly with the communist regime in the North.

Since the Korean peninsula was divided nearly 50 years ago, South Korea has been a close U.S. ally, while the North treats the United States as a bitter enemy.

U.S. officials have denied any possibility of a break with Seoul.

President Bill Clinton said the United States had given up nothing in the agreement that secured Officer Hall's release.

He rejected a suggestion that the deal meant South Korea would be cut out of future U.S. contacts with the North, which Seoul strongly resists.

"The terms of the agreement are clear from their own words. We were faithful to all of our commitments to our allies and to our commitments to our own policies," Mr. Clinton said.

South Korean President Kim Young-Sam Sunday called in a New Year message for an end to mistrust and confrontation between North and South Korea to usher in an era of "reconciliation and cooperation."

"This tragic mistrust and confrontation between our compatriots must now be ended," Mr. Kim said in his address, adding that 1995 marked 50 years of division of the Korean peninsula. "We have yet to resolve this tragedy," Mr. Kim said. "In step with global historical trends, we must usher in an era of North-South reconciliation and cooperation."

Mr. Kim's call came as relations between the North and the affluent South are at a low, marked by bitter verbal broadsides from Pyongyang against Mr. Kim, the South's first non-military backed president in three decades.

It also came as economically-strapped North Korea was showing the first signs since the death of Kim Il-Sung in July of a gradual economic opening of its hermetically-closed society to South Korean and international companies.

But the bulk of his brief televised address was devoted to urging his fellow Koreans to stop procrastinating and jump into the world economy before it is too late.

"We have no time to spare... we must end our hesitation and procrastination. Should we lag one step behind in this global race today, our children may end up trailing behind by 10 years or even a century," Mr. Kim said.

"A new world order is unfolding as the 21st century draws closer heralding, along with the World Trade Organisation, the arrival of an era of unbounded competition between nations and regions," he said.

The address, like his previous New Year message, was addressed to "My 70-million fellow Koreans," a phrase encompassing the 22 million living in the Stalinist North as well as overseas Koreans.

Truce hopes rise; Sarajevo siege clears 1,000 days

SARAJEVO (R) — United Nations representatives expressed optimism that the Bosnian government and rebel Serbs would sign a four-month ceasefire Saturday — the 1,000th day of Sarajevo's bitter siege.

The U.N. military commander in Bosnia, Lieutenant-General Sir Michael Rose, had talks with Bosnian Vice-President Ejup Ganic, and U.N. sources said afterwards a new form of words for an accord to cease hostilities in Bosnia had been worked out.

It was sent to the Bosnian Serbs at their headquarters at Pale, near the Bosnian capital, and if they agreed to the changes, the pact could then be signed, the sources said.

This would be done in two stages — first in Sarajevo, then in Pale, they added.

U.N. special envoy Yasushi Akashi arrived in Sarajevo saying he could not specify exactly when the accord would be signed but added: "I am optimistic."

European indifference to the fate of the Bosnian capital. He said fascism, not Muslim fundamentalism, was the greatest threat to world order.

"In Europe at the end of the 20th century, on television, armed people are free to kill unarmed people," Mr. Silajdzic told Reuters.

"People are unwilling to talk about the revival of fascism, the virus is still around. It's home-made, it's made in Europe. They are happy to talk about Muslim fundamentalism but not about biological fundamentalism."

Sarajevo marked its grim milestone with little fanfare. More than 10,000 residents have been killed and 50,000 wounded since Serbs rebelled against Bosnian independence in 1992 and laid siege to the city.

Mr. Silajdzic said Europe had mistakenly believed it could end the Bosnian war by appealing what he termed "Serbian fascism based on ethnic, biological distinctions" while imposing an arms embargo on the country's sovereign government.

Meanwhile Croatia has built up its armed forces to the point where it could win a war to retake land lost to separatist Serbs if pending peace negotiations failed, the country's military commander said Friday.

"We are now entering 1995 which should be a decisive year in this process and I would not be surprised if we were to start fulfilling this task with a very swift and energetic operation (war)," General Janko Bobetko said.

Gen. Bobetko has presided over a major Croatian military buildup greased by a flood of weapons from underground international markets which have flourished thanks to a largely unenforced U.N. arms embargo on former Yugoslavia.

Diplomats and other analysts say Croatia has obtained considerable quantities of anti-tank weapons and heavy-calibre guns from China, Iran and East European arms merchants selling off old Soviet Bloc stockpiles.

Nationalist hardliners in the Croatian government and military increasingly tout what they say is the army's readiness for a final showdown with the rebel Serb minority which seized a third of Croatia in 1991.

But Foreign Minister Mate Granic Thursday cautioned that Croatia would use war only as a last resort to recover its territory because it feared losing financial and political support from Western Europe.

"We want to become (a) member of the European Union and its financial institutions. A big war is of no interest to anyone in Croatia," Mr. Granic told the weekly Globus in an interview.

Zagreb desperately needs funds to revive an economy shattered by war with Krajina Serbs and has been repeatedly cautioned that a military adventure against them would dry up the taps of international monetary institutions.



A Bosnian woman and her daughter walk across the tarmac at the Sarajevo airport on Friday after disembarking from a plane coming from France. Both returned with 31 other people to their hometown after spending 11 months in France for hospital treatment (AFP photo).

Gen. Bobetko conceded another recapture of Serb-held areas in far eastern Croatia bordering Serbia could provoke a new, wider war with the Yugoslav army.

"Baranja (in eastern Croatia) has been captured, its demographic structure changed and we have to be prepared for such a difficult task of liberating Baranja which may lead into conflict with Serbia," he said. "But if no other course of action is left for Croatia, it will have to take it."

Gen. Bobetko said the Krajina Serbs had no independence in negotiations with Zagreb, describing their leader Milan Martić as a mere executor of the Serbian-Yugoslav government.

Croatia regards the agreement as a precursor to the Krajina enclave's political reintegration due to be negotiated in 1995. But the Krajina Serbs insist on a separate state linked in some way to Yugoslavia.

Gen. Bobetko said Croatia's army had grown from a ragtag militia in 1991 to a respectable force ready to cope with the Krajina Serbs and their armourer, the rump Yugoslav army.

"It is up to us now to determine goals and the targets, as well as (the) time

U.K. papers track down Diana in Colorado resort

LONDON (R) — Princess Diana was seen with a new tycoon on her skiing holiday in the U.S. ski resort of Vail, Colorado, British newspapers reported Saturday.

They said the estranged wife of Prince Charles, heir to the British throne, was staying with American publishing tycoon Michael Flannery and his wife at their chalet in the Rocky Mountain resort.

Tabloid newspapers printed a photograph of the princess getting off a ski lift she was sharing with her Norwegian ski instructor Pentti Tofferi, a man they said was Mr. Flannery and Mr. Flannery's wife, Crystal.

British royal correspondents and photographers had to make a trans-Atlantic dash to Vail after they were wrong-footed by the princess.

Most were more than 5,000 miles (8,000-km) away in the Swiss resort of Klosters where the Duchess of York, Sarah Ferguson, was skiing when news of Princess Diana's secret whereabouts leaked out.

Faced with the choice of staying where they were and reporting "Fergie," or chasing half-way round the globe, few hesitated. En masse they flew to the Rockies.

British newspaper published reports Friday linking Princess Diana to another U.S. multi-millionaire, Teddy Forstmann.



Britain's Duchess of York lifts her younger daughter, Princess Eugenie, as she and her sister Princess Beatrice prepare to ski down a slope near their chalet in the Swiss resort of Klosters, where they spend their traditional winter holidays (AFP photo).

But Mr. Forstmann denied it. In a story filled with exclusive, the Sun quoted 54-year-old Forstmann as saying he knew the princess but had nothing to do with her visit and was skiing in the rival resort of Aspen.

"I am not the new guy in Di's life," the paper quoted Mr. Forstmann as saying, adding that his 30-year-old girlfriend Debbie Hagerty was at his side as he spoke.

The newspapers said Mr. Flannery, described as a millionaire publisher and friend of the Kennedy family's as well as of Mr. Forstmann's, was acting as host to Princess Diana.

The Daily Mirror said a maid at the Flannery's Vail home had confirmed the princess was staying there.

The Daily Express said Mr. Flannery was keen to protect the princess and had denied he even knew her.

"I don't know Princess Diana. I am not the Michael Flannery who took her to a local restaurant, you have the wrong person," it quoted Mr. Flannery saying.

In what it said was proof of the link, the newspaper said Princess Diana and her instructor arrived at Mr. Flannery's home just minutes later, where Mr. Tofferi told waiting reporters furiously: "She wants to keep her visit low key."

The decision by 33-year-old Princess Diana, who separated from Prince Charles two years ago, to stay away from Klosters — the favoured winter holiday resort of Europe's royals — appeared to be significant.

Next week Prince Charles is to take their sons Prince William and Prince Harry on holiday to Klosters, where he narrowly escaped death in an avalanche which killed a close friend in 1988.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation.
Established 1975

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The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays.
Subscription and advertising rates are available from the
Jordan Times advertising department.

Enter '95

BY ANY serious standard, 1994 will go down in the history of the Kingdom as the year that set into motion the process of redefining a major concern of Jordanian foreign policy since the creation of the Kingdom. Antagonism in relations with Israel has been replaced by a mutual willingness to build peace; a lasting one that would be predicated on Israel's recognition of Jordanian rights that were for long usurped.

The year started with clouds of uncertainty that blurred vision of the future. The peace process was stagnating, the democratic process at points looked abandoned and little signs of Arab reconciliation were visible. But 1994 ended with a peace treaty and a clear commitment to revitalise the democratic process. These are the positive elements. But the negatives include unhealthy Arab relations and an economy that is showing few signs of improvement as far as living standards and the cost of living are concerned. And here lie the challenges of 1995.

The signing of the peace treaty was a significant achievement. But its real implications for the Kingdom will be determined by how we face up to the requirements of the new era. Promises that the peace treaty by itself will bring economic prosperity and golden opportunities will not be enough. Only by equipping the Kingdom's institutions and people with the right tools to seize the new opportunities will any real peace dividend be won. Modernising the economy is a promise that the government has made; but little has been done to realise it so far. Jordan cannot afford wasting any more time. The process of reform should start and start immediately.

But only in a democracy can people be confident to unleash their potential for bringing about prosperity to their homes and country. There is no point in denying that democracy took a beating at times during 1994. But it is a process that has its ups and downs, and we are confident of the way we have chosen for ourselves. It is the choice of building, over time, a healthy, stable and prosperous Jordan. A change in government is promised for this year, most probably in the first week of January. So there will be a change in policies and emphasis. A faster move towards liberalisation and democratisation should be at the centre of this change.

While the challenge of consolidating democracy is almost a pure Jordanian decision and process, the saddening situation in Arab ties is an ordeal for which the Kingdom cannot be blamed. Jordan has repeatedly reached out to its Arab brethren. Many of them shunned the overtures. Accordingly, the Arab Nation remains bogged down in the darkness of an abyss that is suffocating its potential for development and progress.

Despite the rhetoric of many a politician, little is being done to put Arab ties on track. The Arab order could not have left last year on a sadder note.

1994 was the year of peace. On that front, Jordan's performance was breathtaking. But 1995 will offer the challenge of making the best out of the new era. Hence is the enormity of the amount of work required. His Majesty King Hussein spoke of the need for profound change to cope with the changing times. That change, we trust, will have to be positive and productive. Happy New Year.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A COLUMNIST in Al Ra'i daily Saturday attacked the mini-summit held in Alexandria between the heads of state of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria as a forum where the three countries displayed their enmity towards Iraq and Jordan. The three states were careful to claim that their meeting was intended as a means of serving common Arab action but in fact this was far from the truth. As far as Egypt, it is angered over the fact that Arab states, including Jordan, have started contacts directly with Washington and Tel Aviv without consulting with Cairo; for Syria it believes that the Palestinians and Jordan have weakened Damascus's negotiating position with Israel by concluding separate deals with the Jewish state while Saudi Arabia is concerned with its internal issues and its problems with Qatar and Oman which are following independent policies. Saudi Arabia is also concerned over the deficits in its budgets, said Tareq Masarweh. The writer said that Saudi Arabia is also afraid that Cairo or Damascus could suddenly change their position vis-a-vis Iraq in reaction to the uneasy developments in the region and found that it had to join the summit meeting to reassert its own stand, said the writer.

MOHAMMAD DAOUD, a writer in Al Dustour, urged the concerned authorities to double their efforts to ensure the success of the family planning system in Jordan. Expressing delight over the fact that many Jordanians have become aware of the need to stem the unusual growth in population, the writer said that family planning, which entails birth spacing, was bound to be beneficial for the mothers' health.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

By Dr. Fahed Faneck

No radical economic changes expected from peace treaty

IF WE examine the peace treaty with Israel and try to analyse the local, regional and international state of affairs, we should be able to conclude that the economic impact of peace will be minimal, and that economic life in Jordan will continue, more or less, at the same level of activity. In other words, peace is not expected to alter the path of the Jordanian economy in any radical way. The treaty was not meant for economic results and should not be judged against this criteria.

It is true that the two sectors of tourism and transport will benefit. Investment climate may improve following peace and the final elimination of threat, but that is about all. There are no reasons for other sectors to expect a rise or fall of activity due to peace.

On the trade level, the boycott of Israel is removed, but the boycott of Jordan remains in place. So far no access to the West Bank market is allowed. It is still an Israeli captured market. Even the Israeli market has its own non-tariff restrictions and specifications that make it almost closed to many Jordanian industries. The Israeli concession to allow Jordan to export \$30 million worth of products to the West Bank before Dec. 31, 1994 expired without implementation.

Trade with Israel may grow and become important with time. It can make 10 per cent of Jordanian imports and exports, which will cause a one time economic growth in GDP of around two per cent, but with Israeli and Jordanian import taxes in place, Israel will simply be another foreign country in the region like Cyprus and Turkey. The addition of Israel to the rest of the world will

not change the picture from a Jordanian point of view. As far as the flow of foreign aid, soft loans and foreign investments are concerned, we should not expect much. Aid, if any, will be too little and too slow to make a difference or to allow the man in the street to feel the benefits of peace in the form of lower unemployment and higher standards of living.

Some pessimists are scared of a so-called Israeli investment invasion of Jordan. They can rest assured that, except for investment in tourism, no Israeli capital will be encouraged to come to Jordan, which is another minus. Israeli investors made it clear in Casablanca that an annual return lower than 20 per cent will not attract them.

The reforms and measures recommended to the government by international experts in response to peace are reforms and measures that should be undertaken any way to improve the efficiency of the economy and improve the climate of investment. Not one measure is only applicable to peace.

In this respect, we should remember that lifting the United Nations sanctions against Iraq will have more favourable impact on Jordan's exports and growth than lifting the barriers with Israel, which we are still divided on whether it is good or bad to the Jordanian economy.

What Jordanian businessmen should do to get ready for the economics of peace? The answer is: All the things they should be doing anyhow. They should upgrade their products, comply with international specifications, keep the cost down and look for new opportunities.



Paper alliances for Israel's 1996 elections

By Peretz Kidron

YITZHAK RABIN's visit to Washington in November mainly comprised high-level strategic talks with U.S. leaders. But his stay in the U.S. capital two weeks after the mid-term elections also afforded him a glimpse of a Democratic president hamstrung by a Republican Congress—possibly a foretaste of what may lie in store for him after the Israeli elections scheduled for 1996, when a new law provides for direct election of the prime minister.

Traditionally, the post has gone to the party leader who could muster a Knesset majority, automatically ensuring the prime minister control of the legislature. But with no party ever winning an outright majority, the required coalition-building has elevated tiny splinter factions into power brokers, enabling them to wring outrageous concessions from the major parties; discontent with the attendant political instability prompted the constitutional reform. Framed to grant the prime minister quasi-presidential status, the direct-election law now holds out intriguing potential for deadlock of the kind that has often plagued Washington, with the executive under one party and the legislature dominated by its adversaries.

While recent months have eroded Mr. Rabin's public support, he still leads his main rival, Likud leader "Bibi" Netanyahu. But polls now show Mr. Rabin's Labour Party running neck-and-neck with Likud; when counting each party's respective allies—the Meretz doves and the Arab lists that usually vote with Labour, as against Likud's "national camp" of ultra-nationalists and the religious factions—the surveys predict a narrow but decisive majority for the latter.

Much can happen in the intervening 20 months before polling day. But should present trends hold, Mr. Rabin could find himself elected prime minister and confronting a Knesset with a "national camp" majority. Such an outcome would leave him with no choice but to invite Likud into his cabinet. As illustrated by the Labour-Likud coalition of the 1970s, "national unity" is a sure-fire recipe for political paralysis, such a coalition would hardly

promote peace efforts with Israel's Arab neighbours; Likud ministers might allow limited concessions towards Syria, but they would certainly veto further implementation of the Oslo accords, setting Israeli-Palestinian relations back on a violent collision course.

Such gloomy forecasts assume that present trends persist till 1996—a risky prediction in Israel's ever volatile political climate. Apart from the vagaries of the peace process, and the swell of anti-Arab fury that sweeps Israel after terrorist acts like the recent Tel Aviv bus-bombing, opinion is swayed by any number of factors, from commonplace concerns over inflation and housing, to public confidence in the probity of political leaders (the Likud's 1992 downfall was due as much to corruption scandals as to any broad shift in public views on major issues of war and peace).

The coming elections may hinge on the mundane matter of mortgage payments. In 1996 the five-year period of grace on mortgages for homes many Russian immigrants bought in the early '90s will end. As they are landed with sizeable monthly payments, the newcomers—many in poorly paid jobs—could face grave financial difficulties just as the election campaign gets under way. Such a downturn could spur the immigrants—who mostly voted Labour in 1992—to punish the government by switching their support elsewhere. Even a minor shift among "the Russians"—over 10 per cent of the electorate—could tilt the balance.

Coalition across party lines

Equally significant for the election outcome are potential changes in existing political alignments, or the emergence of new coalitions cutting across present party lines. There are indications of behind-the-scenes activity as ambitious political strategists lay plans for starting new alliances.

One possibility being discussed is a "Moroccan list" to appeal to the half-million strong North African community, among the most underprivileged segments of the Jewish population. The Orthodox Shas Party,

"drawing most of its votes from "Moroccans," has wavered between government and opposition, reflecting differences between dovish leaders and a more right-leaning constituency. The party's able young leader, Aryeh Deri, is currently on trial on corruption charges; but if he avoids conviction he might seek to restore his personal and political fortunes by allying himself with such figures as former Foreign Minister David Levy, likewise of Moroccan origin. A leading member of Likud, Mr. Levy inclines to its more moderate wing, and sharp personal and political differences with party leader Mr. Netanyahu have given rise to rumours that he plans to defect.

Another possible "Moroccan" component is a group of second-rank Labour MKs associated with the former leadership of the Histadrut unions overthrown in April's elections. Stripped of their power base, and vocally unhappy with the social and economic policies of Mr. Rabin's "cabinet of the rich," some "Labour Moroccans" might be tempted to throw in their lot with Mr. Deri and Mr. Levy. The former is a cautious supporter of the Oslo accords, which Mr. Levy has denounced; but their differences are not insurmountable, and their alliance, spanning the narrow gap between Labour hardliners and Likud moderates, could exercise great popular appeal at the centre of the political spectrum. Rumours of secret contacts among the "Moroccans" have been denied by all concerned, who insist they will have no part in an "ethnic" slate; but the potential exists, and it will be surprising if the initiative is not pursued.

A further alliance rumoured to be in the works is a so-called "yuppy slate," likewise seeking to lure voters from both major parties. While Israelis tend to rigidity in their political loyalties, recent years have seen the success of several multi-party slates. The first model was Ronny Milo's victorious campaign for mayor of Tel Aviv. Mr. Milo, another Likud moderate, contrived to forge a broad coalition that even extended to left-leaning people from Meretz, who were won over when Mr. Milo broke ranks with his party's opposition to the

Oslo accords.

Another defector from traditional allegiances is Haim Ramon. Once a prominent young Labour hopeful, Mr. Ramon resigned from Mr. Rabin's cabinet and ran in the Histadrut elections at the head of an equally eclectic coalition which managed to align the anticlerical Meretz with the rabbi of Shas. His success in wrestling the unions from their discredited Labour leaders may have whetted Mr. Ramon's ambitions. He recently assailed both Likud and Labour as "mutations of parties founded at the beginning of the century" and spoke of "yearning for change in the political map... particularly deep among young people." Although committed to serving out his term as head of the Histadrut, Mr. Ramon has hinted that he might run in 1996. In that event, he would endeavour to draw in his Likud mirror-image, Meir Shitrit, who has likewise distanced himself from that party's present leadership and its hard-line stance.

A Ramon-Shitrit alliance could appeal to young voters weary of the eternal Labour-Likud division. With a line of dovish pragmatism on relation with Israel's Arab neighbours, and yuppie liberalism on domestic matters—notably, opposition to the religious laws both major parties have passed to appease Orthodox interests—such a slate might fulfill a spoiling role, recalling the short-lived "Democratic Movement for Change" which ran in the 1977 elections, drawing large numbers of Labour votes to end that party's 30-year monopoly on power and ease Likud into office.

Yossi Sarid's ambitions

But in its attempt to woo the political centre, a Roman-Shitrit slate could face competition from another "young" politician, the fiftyish Yossi Sarid (youth is a relative term in Israeli politics, long dominated by septuagenarians like Mr. Rabin, Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Shamir). Mr. Sarid made his name mainly as a vocal and eloquent dove; but since joining Mr. Rabin's cabinet on the Meretz ticket, he has traded his hard-hitting rhetoric for a more statesman-like tone, often serving as

Mr. Rabin's chief apologist even when the prime minister pursues policies he once criticised. Mr. Sarid recently announced that he would run against the widely respected Shulamit Aloni for leader of Meretz, but his ambitions extend beyond the wish to lead an ineffective ragbag of leftist liberals; he regards himself as a future prime minister, and to that end, he has launched his own effort to capture the indispensable centre.

In his more radical days, Mr. Sarid condemned the settlements in the occupied territories as obstacles to peace. But, following Mr. Rabin's lead, Mr. Sarid is backing away from an all-out confrontation with tens of thousands of Israelis who have made their homes beyond the "Green Line." To this end, he recently classified settlements into three groups: those to be dismantled; those destined to "come under a different sovereignty, probably Palestinian"; and a third group, in two "blocks," to be annexed to Israel. While Mr. Sarid did not elaborate, his "blocks" seem to refer to the dormitory communities around Jerusalem and in the area real estate brochures designate as "five minutes from Kfar Saba," on the western rim of the occupied territory.

Whatever measure of independence Palestinians would ultimately achieve, the blocks have strategic value in securing Israel's hold on Jerusalem, and broadening its "narrow waist" in the Netanyahu area. From Mr. Sarid's perspective, this plan has the further electoral appeal of leaving the majority of settlers in their present homes; only the unpopular zealots of Gush Etzion, settled in or near Palestinian population centres, are slated for removal. This is precisely the "centrist" position designed to attract middle-of-the-road voters who, while eager to end the occupation and with no sympathy for Gush Etzion, flinch from forcing fellow citizens from their homes in places like Ma'aleh Adumim. Mr. Sarid's proposal may hold little appeal for Palestinians; but most Palestinians do not figure on Israeli electoral rolls.

Nevertheless, half a million Arabs are eligible to vote, constituting another constituency with potential for political surprises. Traditionally, Israel's Palesti-

nian minority has shared its votes between Zionist parties and so-called "Arab slates" like the Communist-led Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (Hadash) or the Arab Democratic Party (Mada). While consistently advocating peace with the Arab states, and equality for Israeli Arabs, these parties are often at cross purposes, denying the Arab community effective representation. But cross-party alliances in defence of Arab rights may have laid the ground for a unified slate seeking to capture most or all Arab votes.

A united Arab list

Speculation hinges upon a possible alliance between the Islamist movement headed by Sheikh Abdullah Nuri Darwish, and secular intellectuals like Ahmad Tibi. At first sight, it seems like a strange coupling. The conservative Darwish and his followers have hitherto shunned the national stage, focusing their efforts on municipal work in Arab communities. Islamist slates have taken over a number of local councils, winning respect with effective and honest administration. Unlike the retiring Darwish, Mr. Tibi is a dapper media celebrity, frequently appearing on Israeli television as articulate spokesman for Yasser Arafat, to whom he serves as advisor on Israeli affairs. But while Mr. Darwish and Mr. Tibi appear to have little in common, both are young pragmatists; notable for their political acumen; they recently worked in effective concert as mediators between the Palestinian authority in Gaza and the Hamas opposition.

Neither man denies rumored plans to field a united Arab list in the 1996 elections. Mr. Darwish recently admitted "we talk about it occasionally, in the car on the way to Gaza." Mr. Tibi noted that he is "obviously coordinated" with Mr. Darwish in shared support for the Oslo accords. Other potential adherents include former Knesset member Mohammad Miani. Polls already show one in four Arab voters inclined to support such an alliance.

Middle East International

LETTERS

Women do deserve a better chance

To the Editor:

KUDOS TO your newspaper for having published the editorial, "Women deserve better," (Jordan Times, Dec. 12, 1994). It is extremely heartening to know that your newspaper takes women's issues seriously.

However, we cannot pretend to believe that the problems faced by women "in this part of the world" can be equated with those that women in the developed countries have to contend with. For, while women in the developed world have acquired a level of self-reliance that comes with education and economic independence, most women here still lead cloistered lives, controlled by the patriarchal set-up of society. It would have made much more interesting reading had your editorial focussed more clearly on the specific issues related to women in the Arab World.

I look forward to reading more enlightening articles on this topical issue in your newspaper.

Shahira Khalid,
Amman.

Do not despair

To the Editor:

I HASTEN to congratulate Abdullah Hasnat on his op-ed piece "Access denied" which was published in the Jordan Times on Dec. 29, 94.

If ever the three estates of government (the executive, legislative and judiciary) are to function in harmony, or even a semblance of it, the fourth estate, the media, should not be denied access to its lifeline, which is information.

Moreover, I support his remark on the subject that "change can only come about by a change in attitude." In my book, the Jordan Times, among others, is one organ of enlightened media that could effectively help the process of educating and changing attitudes.

Do not despair. Patience will eventually translate into triumph.

Ludwig W. Tamari,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

Another eventful year folds

By Sa'eda Kilani

AMMAN — 1994 cannot be classified as good or bad for Jordan. It was simply historic.

The Washington Declaration of July 25 followed by the Wadi Araba treaty on Oct. 26 signalled a new phase in the history of the Kingdom. After 46 years of a state of belligerence between Jordan and Israel, border crossings were opened and telephone lines linked.

The U.N. Cairo conference on population was another major event for the Middle East and the world as a whole. The conference that started with a great deal of bagging had nevertheless a happy ending. Confrontations between Muslim and Christian clergy on the one hand and liberals on the other ended in an unbending but promising compromise. Cairo is already launching campaigns against circumcision of women and Jordan is planning to introduce family planning education at schools.

There were sad moments. Queen Mother Zein Al Sharaf died on April 26 at the age of 85.

And happy ones: Custom duties on cars were reduced.

Following is a chronology of events of 1994:

January:

- 7 — Jordan and PLO sign economic agreement
- 10 — Israel frees 101 Palestinians in goodwill gesture for peace.
- 10 — Jordanian banks allowed to reopen one branch each in West Bank.
- 16 — U.S. President Bill Clinton and Syrian President Hafez Al Assad meet amid positive signals
- House endorses draft budget after marathon debate
- President Assad declares normal ties possible with Israel.
- Ten men guilty of conspiring to assassinate the King, 3 sentenced to death
- 22 — Syrian president's eldest son Basil dies in accident.
- Malbas laments deficiencies of laws to protect consumers in food, drugs
- American rabbis visit Kingdom on peace support mission
- 24 — Peace talks resume amid mixed signals
- 30 — Jordanian diplomat Naeb Maayteh assassinated in Beirut
- 31 — Former Prime Minister Bahjat Talhouni passes away

February:

- 2 — Bomb explodes at Zarqa cinema, two injured
- Iranian embassy reportedly begins staff reduction
- 3 — Deputies demand Malhas substantiate his charges
- 6 — Iran to cut embassy staff to 9
- Two suspects confess to blasts, linked to Afghan returnees
- 8 — Cabinet to endorse sales tax draft law
- 9 — King urges government to ensure quality of food, water and drugs
- Yasser Arafat and Shimon Peres sign agreement in Cairo.
- 12 — Grindlays to reopen in West Bank
- 14 — Toujan Faisal accuses fellow deputy of insult and assault
- 16 — Zeid Rifai secures Higher Council seat, Mudar Badran resigns in protest
- Arafat accuses Israel of facilitating arms trade in



MAKING HISTORY: Jordan and Israel sign a peace treaty in Wadi Araba on Oct. 26

- West Bank
- House fails to end Faisal-Khreishe row
- 20 — Yemeni leaders sign reconciliation accord here
- 22 — PLO, Israel resume self-rule negotiations
- 25-30 — Including Abu Nidal suspects arrested for Maayteh killing
- Massacre at Hebron mosque, 60 killed
- 27 — Bomb blast in Lebanon church claims 9 lives

March:

- 2 — Israel frees 500 detainees
- House votes 59-3 against lifting Khreishe's immunity
- 5 — All four defendants found guilty in New York blast
- 33 Iranian diplomats left Jordan
- 9 — King performs Umra pilgrimage
- 13 — PLO ready to resume talks, if U.S., Russia back U.N. move
- Muslim World celebrates Eid Al Fitr
- 17 — Bank of Jordan to reopen branch in Ramallah
- Security Council condemns Hebron massacre, split on Iraq
- 20 — House votes to disband all municipal councils by end of 1994
- Crown Prince Hassan turns 47
- 21 — Tunisian President Zine Al Abidine Ben Ali reelected with 99% vote
- 23 — Parliament ends its first regular session
- 26 — Arab League opens meeting, freezes changes to charter
- 29 — King links Jordan's return to peace talks with lifting embargo on Aqaba
- 31 — King receives Arafat message, restates stand on Jerusalem.

April:

- 4 — 49 expellees return home
- Fire breaks out in Amman's Forte Grande Hotel, Italian guest killed
- Regent says Jerusalem is inseparably linked to Islam
- 8 — Suicide car bomber kills seven in Afula
- 14 — Bus blast kills 6 in Hadera

- IAF takes the case of 72 Islamist detainees to premier.
- Shootdown of U.S. helicopters kills 21 allied military officers and five Kurdish officers by American warplanes.
- 17 — Suspects in subversion plot rise to 35
- 19 — Festivities held in Amman to celebrate completion of the restoration work of the Dome of the Rock
- Lebanon cuts ties with Iraq
- Passports of Hamas activists in Jordan withheld
- 20 — Israeli army detains over 400 Palestinians
- 21 — Israel, PLO reach deal on civil powers and water for Gaza
- 23 — Fateh, Hamas sign no-violence accord
- 26 — Queen Mother Zein Al Sharaf passes away
- 30 — Israel and PLO sign economic agreement

May:

- Jordan allows free entry and exit for West Bankers
- Document of Arab economic boycott of Israel
- 2 — Jordan marks 41st year of King Hussein's assumption of constitutional powers
- Mandela wins elections
- 4 — Israel, PLO sign autonomy accord
- 7 — Yemenis fight civil war
- 10 — Jordan, PLO open talks on economic accord
- 13 — Israel leaves Gaza and Jericho 27 years after occupation, Palestinian police take over
- 17 — Court finds Jordan Times guilty of violating Press Law
- 23 — Jacqueline Kennedy dies
- 24 — Sister of King Abdullah, Princess Saleha laid to rest
- 26 — Lebanon tries 7 Abu Nidal suspects for killing Maayteh
- 30 — House insists on segregating sexes at sports facilities
- 31 — Israel releases hundreds of prisoners

June:

- 1 — Israel to bar Arafat from Jerusalem

- ESCWA votes to move offices to Beirut
- 6 — Jordan, Israel start talks on border demarcation
- Government reappoints Mohammad Saeed Nabulsi to head CBI
- 8 — Cabinet undergoes major reshuffle
- Jordan marks Arab Army Day
- 9 — Israel agrees to demarcate Jordan borders, study fair water sharing
- 11 — 287 Palestinians freed, PLO gets \$42 million
- 12 — King heads for London en route to U.S. for check-up
- 17 — OJ Simpson arrested on murder charges of his wife Nicole
- 21 — West Bank, Jericho follow Jordan's curricula; Gaza uses Egypt's
- 28 — Al Hussein born to Prince Abdullah and Princess Rania
- 29 killed, 98 injured in a road accident in Irbid
- 30 — Israel frees 500 prisoners
- Jordan, Paris Club reach agreement
- Japan gets first socialist prime minister since 1946

July:

- 1 — Arafat sets foot in Gaza for the first time after 27 years of exile
- 5 — Former Mayor of Jerusalem Rawhi Al Khatib dies at the age of 81
- 9 — King Hussein says he is ready to meet Rabin in public to advance peace
- 11 — Vatican, Jordan to name ambassadors
- 13 — Israel ready for dialogue on Jerusalem shrines with Jordan
- 14 — Israel expels 4 PLO men who entered Gaza with Arafat
- 16 — Suleiman Qudah reelected chief of Jordan Press Association
- Arafat reasserts claim over Arab Jerusalem
- 17 — King says Jordan has the right to defend its rights
- 18 — Jordan, Israel open talks in Wadi Araba
- Blast at Jewish centre in Argentina kills 33
- 19 — Subversion suspects appear in court for pre-trial proceedings
- Coffee reappears at twice the price

- 20 — Israeli Foreign Minister Peres makes first public visit by an Israeli leader to Jordan since 1948
- 21 — Jordan hosts historic trilateral meeting
- 25 — Jordan, Israel sign Washington Declaration with U.S. President Bill Clinton
- end to 46 years of state of war
- 27 — Jordan says its role in Jerusalem is unpoliticised
- 28 — Opposition parties demand change in one-sided coverage of peace talks
- 300 students stage sit-in and burn the Jordanian flag in protest against the Washington Declaration
- 30 — U.S. to write off \$696 million in Jordan's debts
- 31 — Jordan reiterates its non-political stand on shrines in Jerusalem

August:

- 3 — King Hussein flies over Israel and Jerusalem with an Israeli fighter escort on his way home from the Washington summit
- 4 — Israeli Knesset votes 91-3 in favour of the declaration
- 47 deputies voice total support of King's moves
- 6 — 1,000 militants protest against Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasreen
- 8 — Aqaba hosts Jordanian-Israeli summit
- Jordan and Israel open direct telephone lines, a border crossing between Aqaba and Eilat
- Warren Christopher holds talks with Assad.
- 9 — Jordan and Israel start negotiations on border demarcation and water rights
- 9 — UNRWA moves offices from Vienna to Gaza
- 10 — Jordanian and Israeli survey teams demarcate 1928 borders
- Jordan marks 42nd anniversary of King's accession to the Throne
- 15 — Crown Prince forms Royal Commission for Modernisation and Development
- Carlos the Jackal arrested in Sudan and flown to France after two decades on the run
- PLO launches an unprecedented crackdown on Hamas members in Gaza
- 17 — Jordan, Israel sign

- trade deal for West Bank market
- 20 — Israel releases 247, exiles them to Jericho
- 22 — Palestinians, Israel plan to buy oil from Iraq
- 44 killed in Morocco aircraft crash
- 23 — Queen Noor celebrates 43rd birthday
- Israel, PLO reach deal on taxation and budget
- 24 — Israel, PLO initiated a new agreement to transfer to the Palestinians responsibility for health care, tourism and other services throughout the West Bank
- 26 — The end of the naval blockade of Aqaba
- 28 — Extremists threaten Cairo conference on population
- 29 — PLO, Israel sign early empowerment deal
- 30 — IAF blasts U.N. population conference

September:

- 2 — Two killed, hundreds arrested in feud over Cairo conference
- OIC urges Muslim states to attend Cairo conference
- The draft document was criticised by Muslim and Catholic groups who say it promotes abortion, homosexuality and sex outside marriage
- Israel halts a visit by Benazir Bhutto to the Palestinian self-rule areas
- 5 — Cairo conference on population opens; heated debate over abortion
- 7 — Islamists up in arms over U.N. conference
- 8 — In a meeting with Regent, opposition resigns itself to inevitable peace
- First Islamic bank approved for Palestinian self-rule areas
- 10 — Compromise over abortion reached at Cairo conference, Vatican has reservations
- PLO prepares for elections
- 13 — Cairo conference adopts a 20-year plan aimed at broadening the approach to population control.
- 15 — Arab League hails Washington Declaration, says Jerusalem city must be restored to Palestinian sovereignty
- 17 — King reiterates his

- resolve to continue historic role in Jerusalem
- 19 — U.S. troops began occupation of Haiti
- 21 — Three journalists questioned over violations of press law
- 22 — Jordanians protest the transfer of some Latin American embassies in Israel from Tel Aviv to occupied Jerusalem
- 26 — Cairo prepares law banning female circumcision
- 27 — Al Urdun Al Jadid Research Centre closed by Amman Governorate for not having a licence
- 29 — Arafat welcomes Jordan's decision to give Palestinians control of religious affairs in the West Bank but does not refer to the parallel decision by the Kingdom reasserting its resolve to continue to play its role in Arab East Jerusalem's Muslim holy places

October:

- 3 — Arab League rejects GCC decision to relax a 47-year-old economic boycott of Israel
- 4 — Jordan, Israel reach accord on common economic projects
- 6 — Supreme Court Chief Rifat Shammout resigns
- 7 — More than 60,000 Iraqi troops begin deployment in southern Iraq near border with Kuwait
- Israel begins clearing minefields in Wadi Araba
- 9 — IAF criticises GCC for lifting Arab boycott
- 10 — Tension rises as Iraq insists on its stand
- Potash company raises foreign capital
- 11 — Iraq announces pull-back from border
- 12 — Rabin suspends autonomy talks in Cairo after the kidnap of an Israeli soldier
- 13 — U.S. says Iraq still poses threat
- 14 — Israeli hostage, commando and three kidnappers killed in an attempt to rescue the soldier held hostage by the Hamas group
- Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz is stabbed by extremists
- 17 — Jordan, Israel initial peace treaty
- Opposition rejects accord

Police kill five suspected Islamic militants including mastermind of Mahfouz attack

18 — Cabinet endorses treaty, authorises Majali to sign it

Taber Masri quits race for Lower House speakership

PLO assails Israel's treaty with Jordan saying it violated the PLO's own deal with the Jewish state

19 — Suicide bomber kills 22, wounds over 40 in centre of Tel Aviv

22 — Sa'ed Hayel Srou elected speaker of the Lower House by 41 to 36

26 — Jordan, Israel sign historic deal in Wadi Araba on Israeli-Jordanian borders and water rights with U.S. president as witness

30 — Government studies proposal to reduce customs on cars

King urges end to unfounded criticism of peace treaty

An unprecedented Arab-Israeli economic conference opens in Casablanca

November:

2 — Jordan, Israel and Egypt set up joint bank

4 — 21 Jordanians killed and 11 missing in flashfloods that swept the country

7 — Lower House endorses peace treaty (55-23)

9 — Health Ministry reports 110 AIDS cases

Jordan-Israel treaty constitutionalised

10 — Iraq endorses a resolution recognising Kuwait within U.N. defined boundaries

13 — Customs duties on cars reduced

14 — Jordan celebrates King's birthday

15 — Iraq notifies U.N. of recognition of Kuwait but sanctions unchanged

19 — First tomato consignment to leave for Israel

13 killed, 200 wounded in PNA-Hamas clash in Gaza

20 — Geagea goes on trial on blast, murder charges

Local tomatoes fail Israeli test

24 — Shipment of Jordanian tomato enters Israel after successfully passing quality control and specifications tests

22 — IAF urges France to lift ban on scarf

King awards medals and gifts to peace negotiators

Fateh holds a meeting to counter Hamas and Islamic Jihad

Eight killed in Palestinian fighting in 'Ain Al Hilweh

27 — Jordan and Israel announce the establishment of diplomatic ties; Marwan Muasher appointed first ambassador to Israel

28 — EU lifts arms embargo on Syria

December:

6 — Hindawi submits resignation, cites disagreements in Cabinet over policies in post-peace era

8 — Government presents '95 budget to Parliament

Senator Ahmad Obeidat resigns, former Minister of Labour Qassem Obeidat takes his seat

10 — Rabin, Arafat, Peres receive 1994 Nobel prize in recognition of their historic self-rule deal

11 — Jordan, Israel open embassies

Opposition stages rally against opening of Israeli embassy

12 — Jordan votes against repeal of capital punishment law

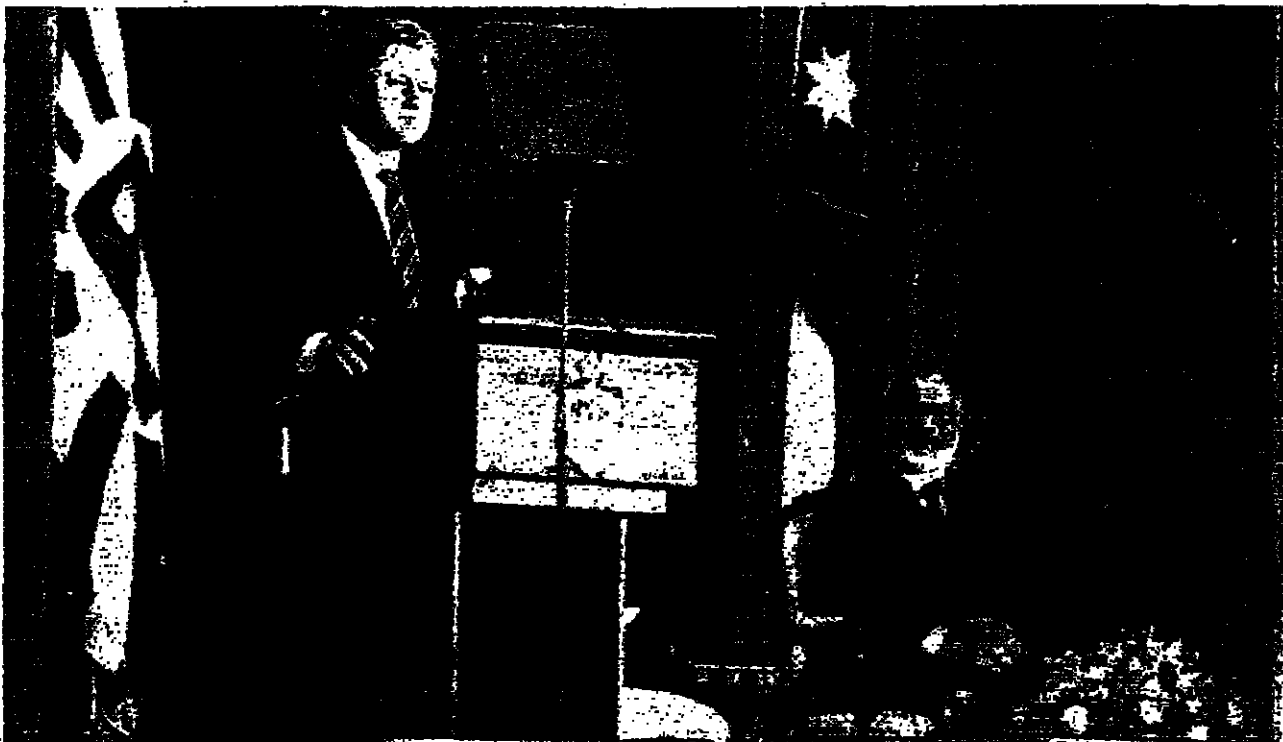
300 University students protest the opening of Israeli embassy

(Continued on page 3)



His Majesty King Hussein accepts applause from members of the U.S. Congress before addressing them on July 25 and

announcing the end of the state of belligerence between Jordan and Israel (AFP photo)



U.S. President Bill Clinton on Oct. 26 becomes the first world leader to address Parliament (file photo)

GCC countries give way to private sector

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab Gulf states, reeling under weak oil prices, enter the new year with plans to push ahead with sweeping reforms ushering in the end of government domination of the economy and enabling the private sector to tap their enormous overseas resources.

After decades of subsisting on government spending, the private sector in the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is becoming increasingly independent and has started to record sustainable growth rates despite persistent reductions in state budgets due to low oil prices.

Officials and economists said they expected the private sector to become the pivot of economic growth in the coming years after it had played only a marginal role in massive infrastructure projects during the oil boom.

They cited government privatisation plans, new incentives for industries, the large domestic liquidity, the liberal economic policies and modern infrastructure that will woo in local and foreign investors.

"While substantial government investments had laid the foundations of sustained economic growth in many areas and the creation of a large infrastructure base, the GCC private sector is now bound to increase its participation and eventually take the lead in future economic development," GCC Secretary General Fahim Al Qassbi said.

"Privatisation of key public sector enterprises such as petrochemical plants, telecommunications, airlines and refineries is now firmly on the agenda for the GCC countries," he told an offshoot conference in Abu Dhabi.

GCC states — Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and the United Arab

Emirates (UAE) — announced economic reforms to cushion the impact of low oil prices that have created a persistent shortfall in the budgets and turned large surpluses in their balances of payments into deficits.

Although most of them slashed spending in 1994, they still projected a deficit of around \$9.5 billion compared with \$14 billion in 1993. Their trade balance continued to record a surplus of around \$18 billion in 1993 but the balance of payment suffered from a deficit of \$40-\$50 billion due to continued Gulf war payments and a rise in services imports and remittances.

"GCC economies have continued to grow despite lower oil prices over the past years. But this is due to a growth in the private sector, or in other words, the non-oil sector," a Gulf economist said.

With closing of Treuhand, chapter of German unity ends

BERLIN (R) — Germany's Treuhandanstalt, the agency charged with privatising the former East Germany's industry, shut its doors Friday, ending one of the most controversial chapters in the history of German unification.

Often criticised for selling eastern German industry at a dizzying pace that put millions out of work, agency officials took a last chance to defend what they called the real nuts and bolts of making the dream of unification a reality.

"We have laid the groundwork," Birgit Breuel, the self-assured Treuhand president, said in defence of the agency's quick-selloff policy. "It was the only conceivable way to give these companies a chance for the future," she said.

Working out of the forbidding building that used to house the Nazi air force, the Treuhand's highly-paid western managers and yuppie

business graduates sold off 14,000 firms in the past 4½ years behind a wall of near secrecy over how they did it.

Despite frequent protests to protest against plant closures, only one and a half million of the nearly four million people employed by the companies the agency took control of in 1990 are still working. Instead of reaping profits that could be distributed to all east Germans, as the agency was originally designed to do, it ran up debts and was accused of turning eastern Germany into an industrial wasteland.

Treuhand Finance Director Heinrich Hornef said the agency's total deficit would be closer to 260 billion marks (\$167.5 billion) than the 270 billion marks (\$174 billion) initially envisaged. The deficit for this year alone would

total just under 35 billion marks (\$22.55 billion).

Successor agencies that will oversee some contracts and sell off real estate will have 65 unsold firms on their hands.

Manfred Lennings, Treuhand administrative board chairman, defended the agency's record, saying that the human and financial costs would have been much higher if the agency had moved less swiftly to sell off the former communist industry.

"Over the past few years, the Treuhand agency was the place that gathered the greatest experience with German unification," he said. "There were no rules to refer to when modernising, privatising and also shutting down such a large number of companies."

In the final days of this year, the agency clinched some of its toughest privatisation deals. It managed to find

buyers for such large and hard-to-sell plants as steel mill Eko Stahl, railcar builder Deutsche Waggonbau and the Buna chemical works.

But the powerful I.G. Metall trade union points out that when it shuts down, the agency will leave behind a region where industry has shrunk to only 30 per cent of its former size and only one

in four previous factory jobs remains.

Horst Wagner of the I.G. Metall union in Berlin-Brandenburg said only 18 per cent of the workforce now have jobs in industry in his state compared to 38 per cent in rich western regions.

"The deindustrialisation we feared has arrived," he said.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, JANUARY 1, 1995

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

GENERAL TENDENCIES: The triple Moon in Capricorn conjunction to the Sun, Mercury and Neptune adds power to this New Moon which starts our New Year off with a positive bang in more ways than are immediately apparent.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19) You can improve relations with others very easily. Put yourself in their shoes in order to understand their position better.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) Quiet activity is your best mode of procedure now, so get busy early and gain your aims easily. Show more affection for your loved ones.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 21) You have every chance to contact good friends and gain their cooperation for your ambitions. A good day to get shopping done.

MOON CHILDREN (June 22 to July 21) If you want to accomplish something in the outside world, wear a smile. Try to please your mate more.

LEO (July 22 to August 21) Make new contacts and cultivate them for more support in the future. Avoid one who has an eye on your assets and wants to make it his or her.

VIRGO (August 22 to September 22) You get fine ideas as to how to have more rapport with your mate. Your intuition tells you how to deal with one in business.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) See those clever friends who are inclined to push you into doing things that are advantageous to you. Avoid a tricky individual today.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) If you use a different approach at whatever tasks you get into, you can soon finish them. Take it easy tonight with your loved ones.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) This is a good day to be with those you are most fond of and who are congenial and fun to be with. Get your appearance at its best.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 20) This is a good day for having a delightful time at home with kin and others. Invite friends and close associates who are charming into your home.

AQUARIUS (January 21 to February 19) Get in touch with persons whom you like but have not seen in some time. These get out and visit people who are very close to you.

PISCES (February 20 to March 20) Make your home more charming by adding art objects, etc. Handle small repairs around your home and you can save yourself a lot of money.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

FORECAST FOR MONDAY, JANUARY 2, 1995

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

GENERAL TENDENCIES: Six positive aspects today should provide the emphasis you need to relaunch yourself in exactly the right direction that will make certain you attract the attention of well placed higher ups.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19) This is a good day for making collections, paying bills and solving problematical affairs. Be most careful in driving on the highway.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) Get your health and appearance improved during the daytime so that you can be with important friends at pleasures which will be most enjoyable.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 21) Get into the quiet of your study and formulate a plan for gaining greater abundance. Be happy in the company of your loved ones.

MOON CHILDREN (June 22 to July 21) A good friend can give you fine suggestions today after you have taken care of minute matters. Dress nicely tonight.

LEO (July 22 to August 21) You have procrastinated on career activities and should now get caught up on them without delay. Think along constructive lines.

VIRGO (August 22 to September 22) Get into tasks connected with a new project during the daytime before studying new interests tonight which could be very beneficial.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) Show business people you deal with which you are conscientious at your responsibilities. Clean out files and drawers at your office.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) Be sure to keep promises you have made to partners today. Come to a better understanding with an associate in the evening.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) Be sure you handle duties very carefully today. Find some better way of pleasing fellow associates in the evening.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 20) Be sure you handle the details of entertainment plans carefully in the morning. Drive with care while on the highway.

AQUARIUS (January 21 to February 19) Be sure to keep promises made to kin and be helpful in problematical affairs. Get caught up on routine activities put off until now.

PISCES (February 20 to March 20) You can handle letter writing and other paper work very well today, so get busy on this. Keep an eye on your wallet so you can have extra money.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

China attributes highest level of inflation to ambitious reforms

BEIJING (R) — China's inflation in 1994 hit its highest level since the 1949 communist takeover, and officials Friday attributed this to ambitious reforms to sweep away Stalinist central planning and create a market-oriented economy.

The economy grew more quickly in 1994 than the government had planned and industrial growth far outstripped agricultural growth, but losses reported by China's huge inefficient state enterprises also rose sharply, State Statistical Bureau spokesman Ye Zhen told a news conference.

Gross domestic product (GDP) grew by a preliminary estimate of 11.8 per cent to 4.38 trillion yuan (\$515.3 billion) in 1994, exceeding 4.0 trillion yuan (\$470.6 billion) for the first time, he said in a year-end report.

Beijing had set a nine per cent growth target after the economy expanded by 13.4 per cent in 1993 and 12.8 per cent in 1992. Economists are forecasting similar growth in 1995.

"At present China is still one of the countries... with potential for most vigorous economic development," Mr. Ye said. "Generally speaking, the economic performance for the year 1994 is basically normal, the achievements made are encouraging."

Rapid economic growth was in part to blame for the two key indices of inflation remaining above 20 per cent — more than double the official 1994 target of 10 per cent.

The consumer price index rose 24.2 per cent compared with 1993, while the retail price index, a narrower measure that excludes services, climbed a year-on-year 21.7 per cent.

"The major problems existing in the economic performance are the price rise of consumer products is high... in the transitional period of shifting to the market economy, the price rise is unavoidable," Mr. Ye said.

The government had underestimated the 1994 impact of raising the price of grain — the key commodity still under state control — coupled with disastrous floods and drought that further fuelled the rise in agricultural prices, he said.

Mr. Ye predicted inflation would fall in 1995.

The government would implement no price reforms in early 1995 as part of its campaign to cool inflation, Mr. Ye said, but declined to say if any sectors would face price liberalisation in the second half of the year.

"What we need now is a certain period in which to digest the price rises that we've seen already," Mr. Ye told Reuters. "I can say that in the first half of 1995 we will be digesting prices, not carrying out further price reforms."

Inflation was 13 per cent in 1993. China said it wanted to hold inflation around 10 per cent in 1994, but officials and economists concede the goal is unattainable in 1994 or 1995.

"I think a lot of people do not understand that much of what we are calling inflation is the result of planned price

reforms," Mr. Ye said in an interview. "There are some who would argue this shouldn't be called inflation at all."

China has said it wants to deregulate the prices of almost all commodities as part of the 15-year-old reforms of paramount leader Deng Xiaoping so the economy becomes a system governed by the market and not Communist Party bureaucrats.

Mr. Ye said coal, which provides 70 per cent of China's energy and whose supply price is still held artificially low, was in serious need of price reform. High black market prices have been a factor in boosting inflation.

Industrial added value grew by 18 per cent in 1994 to 1.84 trillion yuan (\$216.5 billion), with faster growth recorded in coastal areas and the non-state economy, Mr. Ye said. Industrial added value grew 21.1 per cent in 1993 compared with 1992.

Beijing issues figures sometimes for industrial output sometimes for industrial added value.

At the end of November, losses of state-owned enterprises were up 27.6 per cent from a year earlier, he said. Reforms in 1995 could force these loss-makers to turn a profit or face bankruptcy.

Fixed asset investment soared by 28.5 per cent to 1.6 trillion yuan (\$188.2 billion), a growth rate 30 percentage points lower than last year due to a credit crunch.

The incomes of both urban and rural dwellers rose after inflation, Mr. Ye said.

French unemployment edges up

PARIS (R) — French unemployment edged higher in November but the labour ministry Friday said the jobless trend was still heading downward in the longer term.

A seasonally adjusted 3,000 people joined the unemployment roll in November, taking the total to 3,337,200.

The jobless rate based on International Labour Organisation criteria, which exclude jobseekers who did any work, was unchanged from October at 12.6 per cent of the workforce and in line with forecasts by economists.

But the figure may cause some embarrassment for the government, which had promised unemployment would end 1994 at about the same level as it started it.

Influential daily newspaper Le Monde led its front page with the story, noting that at the end of November it was some 47,000 higher than in December 1993. It was unlikely to fall by so much in one month, so the government would probably miss its target.

Nonetheless, the paper did not dispute the official thesis that unemployment was sta-

bilising.

Labour Minister Michel Girard said the slight increase was in line with a stabilisation of the labour situation over the previous six months and a slowdown in unemployment was still clear.

The November jobless rate was the same as that in April. Conservative Prime Minister Edouard Balladur has been saying unemployment has peaked and is on its way down. He has promised to slash the jobless register by a million in five years.

But in the run-up to a presidential election in May, with the unemployment rate still near its record 12.7 per cent, he will be hoping for more sharp falls like a drop of 17,700 in October, which was the biggest monthly decline in four years.

Mr. Balladur is likely to declare his candidacy officially in January, pitting himself against the leader of his own party, Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac, who has been campaigning on the need for more radical government action to create jobs.

Mr. Girard noted a decline in new jobless registrations due to a drop in forced redundancies, which were 40

per cent lower than in July.

"There is clearly an indisputable deceleration," he said. "Jobs have been created at quite a rapid rate in 1994 as the economy recovered sharply from the recession that struck hard the year before."

But that renewed economic activity has also tempted a lot of people not previously registered at the labour exchange to start looking for work. That increase in the so-called active population has meant that new jobs have not been transformed into an immediate fall in unemployment.

Friday's data followed another piece of minor but unwelcome economic news for the government. Banks raised their base lending rates by 0.30 percentage points late Thursday.

That move merely reflected the recent trend in money-market interest rates and economists said it would have no impact on the economic recovery or on official bank of France policy.

But it is unlikely to please ministers who are trying to convince a sceptical electorate that things are looking up.

Peruvian president says economy grew 12.8 per cent last year

LIMA (R) — President Alberto Fujimori said late Friday that preliminary data shows that the Peruvian economy grew by 12.8 per cent in 1994, the highest growth in the region.

"An interesting figure provided by CEPAL is that next year, Peru is again going to be number one in the region in economic growth. They foresee 6.5 per cent (growth rate)," Mr. Fujimori said. "It's going to something more" than the CEPAL's figure," he added.

Commission for Latin America (CEPAL), an organisation of the United Nations, said Peru's economy grew the fastest in the region in 1994, estimating its growth at 11.7 per cent.

Currently, about 12 million of Peru's 23 million people are living in poverty. "When there is faster economic growth, there are more tax collections," he said, adding that these resources are being channelled to the neediest sectors.

When asked how the economic growth predicted for the country would translate into better living standards for Peruvians, Mr. Fujimori said "first we have to have macroeconomic stabilisation and then it will gradually trickle down to the population."

Currently, about 12 million of Peru's 23 million people are living in poverty.

"When there is faster economic growth, there are more tax collections," he said, adding that these resources are being channelled to the neediest sectors.

Peanuts



Andy Capp



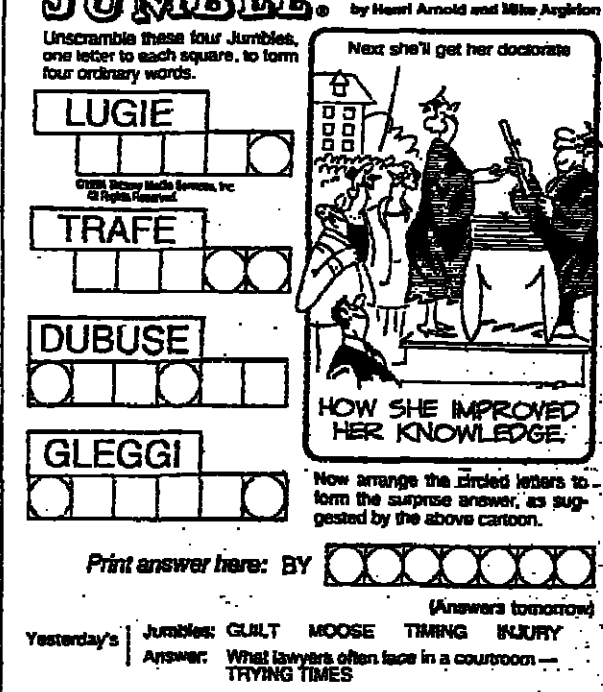
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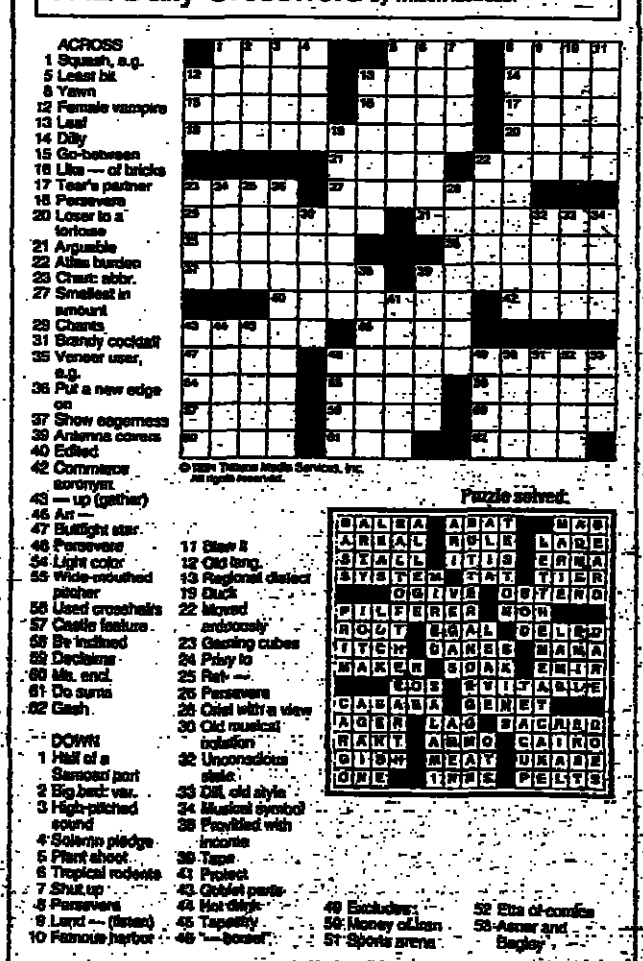
THE BETTER HALF.



JUMBLE



THE Daily Crossword by Wilson McEath



business
daily
beat

A review
of economic news
from the Arabic press

Labour violations reach 18,000

★According to the minister of labour, the number of permits issued to foreign workers declined from 96,000 in 1992 to 56,000 in 1993 and went down further to 50,000 in 1994. Most of the foreign labourers worked in the construction, agriculture and service sectors. Some technical experts worked in other areas and for Arab and foreign investors. The ministry issued 18,000 violations last year and fined the employers for a total of JD1 million for hiring foreign workers without permits. The ministry has 31 vocational training centres to train Jordanians in order to have them replace foreign workers. The ministry, which monitors about 100,000 institutions, has banned foreign workers from 15 professions, including accounting, pharmaceuticals, clerical and driving (Al Ra'i).

★Nutri Dar is a new public shareholding company floating one million shares worth JD1 million for public subscription. Registered under number 257 at the Ministry of Industry and Trade on Sept. 29, 1994, with a JD4 million capital, 27 founders have subscribed to JD3 million. Main founders are: Dar Al Dawa Development and Investment Company (JD1.2 million), Nizar Jardaheh (JD375,000) and Jordan Investment and Finance Bank (JD 100,000). The new company aims mainly at producing baby milk and food. Subscription starts Saturday, Jan. 7, 1995, and ends Jan. 26, 1995 (Al Ra'i).

★Jordan Export Development and Trade Centres Corporation will participate in two fairs in Dubai and Egypt to be held during March 1995. Interested Jordanian manufacturers wishing to exhibit their products should contact the corporation before Jan. 10, 1995, for the Egyptian fair (Al Ra'i).

★The Amman Bank for Investment denied having requested to open any branch in Israel or the Palestinian territories. A bank official said the bank had only submitted applications to open a representative office in Ramallah. The bank last year signed an agreement with Bank of Palestine to be its correspondent in the West Bank and Gaza (Al Ra'i).

★A dispute between an agent in Jordan and an Iraqi buyer has entangled the transport company which has 24 of its refrigerator trucks loaded with meat stock at the Jordanian-Iraqi border. The trucks have been blocked at the crossing for more than 21 days (Al Dustour).

★The Greater Amman Municipality has decided to incorporate the profession and health licences in one form as of the beginning of 1995. As such, businesses are required to bring both licences when applying for renewal next year in order to get a unified licence (Al Dustour).

★Under an agreement signed between the civil aviation authorities of Jordan and Malaysia, Royal Jordanian will increase the number of its flights to Kuala Lumpur to three per week (Al Aswaq).

★Saudi Arabia decided to give Jordanian drivers of refrigerator trucks a six-month multiple entry visa. Previously, Riyadh was allowing the drivers a one-week or two-week single journey visa. Since Jordanian refrigerator trucks go beyond Saudi Arabia to the other Gulf countries of Oman, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, all what the drivers hope for now is to obtain transit visas to the countries in addition to the six-month Saudi entry visa (Al Aswaq).

Mexico turmoil likely to cause only ripples in U.S.

WASHINGTON (R) — The turmoil engulfing Mexico's currency and economy is likely to create only minor ripples north of the border in the huge U.S. economy, economists said.

The approximately 40 per cent slide in the value of the peso is expected to cut the price of Mexican goods imported here, particularly fruit and vegetables, silver jewelry and leather.

Grocers, electronics stores and others catering to Mexicans who cross the border to shop in states such as California and Texas are likely to see sales fall because of the peso's woes. Reports from the border area say sales already have dropped.

U.S. industries that export to Mexico — such as auto parts, telecommunications equipment and plastics, among others — are likely to see sales there drop in the short run. The peso's weakness makes U.S. goods more expensive in Mexico.

But economists expect no shock waves that would really affect the robust growth and low inflation the U.S. enjoys.

"Although Mexico is an extremely important trading partner, recent events there are unlikely to have a major effect on the U.S. economy," said David Gould of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas.

"We have two countries that are very integrated with one another, which leads investors to think that when one has a problem the other will suffer," said Mark Spiegel of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco.

"But I just don't see it, because the Mexican economy is so small relative to

the United States," he added.

The U.S. output of goods and services worldwide last year was nearly 20 times that of Mexico. Put another way, the United States accounted for about a quarter of world economic output in 1993, according to World Bank data.

Mexico is vying with Japan to be the United States' second largest trading partner after Canada.

The North American Free Trade Agreement that joined the United States, Mexico and Canada into a huge trading bloc at the start of 1994 has helped fuel U.S.-Mexican trade, said the Commerce Department. U.S. exports to Mexico have been running a record average rate of \$1 billion a week since May.

But because trade with Mexico accounts for only a fraction of the \$5.4 trillion U.S. economy, the impact of the turmoil in Mexico on overall U.S. inflation and growth is expected to be slight, said economists.

U.S. exports to Mexico of goods, services and receipts of income from investments in Mexico accounted for about one per cent of U.S. gross domestic product in 1993.

Imports from Mexico of goods and services and payments of income for Mexican investments in this country equalled about one per cent of GDP.

Economists expect the flow of U.S. exports to slow, at least in the near term.

And the higher Mexican interest rates accompanying the turmoil are expected to restrain growth south of the border, curbing demand for U.S. goods and services.

World financial markets wrap up bleak '94

LONDON (R) — World financial markets Friday quietly wrapped up a bleak year that many traders in Europe and Asia would like to forget, but there were widespread hopes that 1995 would be much better for stocks.

Of the major markets, only the two largest, Tokyo and New York, made good gains, of 13.24 and 2.4 per cent respectively.

In Europe the euphoria at the start of the year soon gave way to gloom and there were sharp losses in Paris (17 per cent) London (10 per cent) and Frankfurt (seven per cent).

Although Tokyo did well in rebounding from recession, foreign investors were still cautious at the end of the year after the market's decline since the summer on dwindling volume. The key index has yet to reconquer the 20,000 level.

Other Asian markets had a rough time as Hong Kong, a strong riser in 1993, lost a whopping 31.1 per cent on its Hang Seng index, one of the worst performances in 12 years.

Sydney also did poorly, losing 12 per cent.

What started the rot, market experts agreed, was the signal from the U.S. Federal

Reserve in February that the period of easy money was over and that the central bank was determined to get to grips with inflationary pressures. This alarmed the bond markets, which successfully demanded higher long-term yields to compensate for their fears of inflation.

The knock-on effects soon undermined stocks, causing many analysts to revise their earlier bullish forecasts and catching out many investors stuck with over-valued shares and who then gambled that the downturn would soon reverse.

At the end of the year, several countries such as Britain and France were basking in solid growth, low inflation and good corporate profits that seemed to augur well for the future.

Analysts said the Paris bourse should recoup this year's losses in 1995 with solid investment and earnings growth, and low inflation more than offsetting nervous-

ness ahead of the French presidential election in the spring.

But many analysts say that in today's electronically linked markets, national markets could not operate free of pressure from elsewhere.

"The world's economies and markets are increasingly interdependent and international perspectives and fundamentals will ultimately matter most," said Graeme Knox of the Scottish Amicable Insurance Group. "The U.S. economy remains the key."

Wall Street gurus believe the economy is headed for a modest slowdown in 1995. Some U.S. economists are confident Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan will steer the economy to a soft landing that will be good for company profits and stocks.

But many sceptics in Europe are not so sure, suggesting the U.S. market after its rise this year is overvalued and that sentiment might not

easily withstand a likely further ratcheting up of interest rates early in the new year if the economy continues to steam ahead at a four per cent growth rate. Many London analysts see a double-digit percentage rise in prospect for the FTSE 100 after the grim 1994 but the strong economic picture might be undermined by political uncertainties nearing an election that the Labour Party is favoured to win.

A rebound in the dollar is expected to improve sentiment for U.S. markets in 1995 and ease pressure on the Japanese yen, but analysts say things could change if Germany's Bundesbank starts raising interest rates to combat inflation.

"Further Federal Reserve tightening in the first half of next year means the dollar will remain strong but in the second half other countries, Germany in particular, will start to tighten," said James Montier, economist at Kleinwort Benson.

Rafsanjani plans 1,000 stores to tame bazaar

TEHRAN (R) — Iran's President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, faced with complaints about empty store shelves and high prices, has announced plans for setting up a 1,000-store chain to end the hold of bazaar merchants on retailing.

"The leech-like elements standing between production distribution and consumption... will have to be eliminated," said Mr. Rafsanjani at the Friday prayers in Tehran.

"Our situation in distribution dates back to centuries ago... (it) has to be adapted to requirements of today's world," he said. His sermon was broadcast by state Tehran Radio.

Bazaar merchants were among the main supporters of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's 1979 Islamic revolution.

They were pushed to the sidelines during the 1980s when the government, at war with Iraq, took control of most of the economy. They were given a bigger role under free-market reforms launched after the end of the eight-year war in 1988.

Mr. Rafsanjani said the plan involved setting up a

chain of about 1,000 stores at a capital of one trillion rials (\$372 million at the official exchange rate). The figure is closer to \$370 million when converted at the open market rate.

He said 60 per cent of the capital would be raised by offering shares to the public starting next week. The state would guarantee the principal and a 20 per cent annual return for the first five years.

The rest of the capital for the chain of stores called Refah (welfare) would be provided by the Commerce Ministry, state banks and municipalities, he said.

The plan is the latest in a government anti-profiteering drive launched in October and which bazaar retailers have been singled out as the main cause of spiralling prices.

"Store shelves are empty of cheese, butter and cream," the hardline Kayhan newspaper said this week. It said the price of grains, vegetables, clothing and other items has increased.

The plan to set up the stores has met with opposition from an influential Islamic organisation grouping bazaar merchants.

UAE and Qatar exempt from new Arab Gulf share rules

ABU DHABI (R) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar have won an exemption period from new rules intended to widen share ownership in stock markets in the six Arab Gulf states, a UAE official has said.

The official confirmed a report in the Al Bayan daily saying the two states would not yet apply rules allowing Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) citizens to own and trade certain categories of shares in each other's countries.

The UAE's exemption is for five years. It was not clear if Qatar's was for the same period, and Qatari officials, were not immediately available for comment.

The six GCC states —

Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain — announced the new rules last week as a first step towards linking the region's stock markets.

The UAE and Qatar have yet to implement plans announced last year to set up official stock exchanges. Investors in both countries trade shares through brokers.

GCC citizens can trade shares in official exchanges in Kuwait and Bahrain and with some limitations in Oman. But the Saudi exchange, the region's biggest, is open only to nationals.

"The reason for the exemption was to give us some time to formulate regulations," the official told Reuters. "It's only a technical matter. There are no political

implications." A local broker in the UAE said the exemption would not have much effect in any case because 20 of the 26 stocks now traded there are banks, insurance firms or exchange houses — categories exempted from the new GCC rules.

In addition, a large proportion of the equity of the remaining six firms is owned by government bodies. But the new rule would become significant if state-owned industries in the UAE were sold off to the private sector, the broker added.

In Qatar 22 stocks are traded of which nine are banks or insurance firms. Two of the remaining firms are Saudi.

Financial Markets

Foreign Exchange Market Summary (December 26 - December 30, 1994)

AMMAN — The dollar depreciated sharply against major European currencies at the end of last week, while depreciating slightly against the yen. It ended the week 1.92 per cent lower against the mark, 1.31 per cent lower against sterling and 0.37 per cent lower against the yen.

While New York and European centres closed on Christmas Monday, the dollar depreciated against the mark and rose marginally against the yen and sterling Tuesday. The dollar showed little reaction to the release of the U.S. consumer confidence index showing an increase from 100.4 during November to 102.2 during December, its highest level in four and half years. On the other hand, the Mexican currency continued its depreciation against the dollar, due to dealers' concern over the Mexican government's economic policy.

The dollar declined sharply against other major currencies Wednesday. Its decline came on the back of rumours, later denied by the U.S. Treasury Department, that the Mexican government used its line of credit from the United States and Canada to support its currency. Analysts indicated that the dollar's decline was due to the cost to the U.S. economy associated with extending credit to Mexico.

The dollar rose against other major currencies Thursday. The rise materialised in spite of the mark's appreciation against the Italian and Spanish currencies in cross trading. Political instability in both Spain and Italy lead to wide spread selling to both currencies against the mark.

At the end of the week, the dollar retreated against European currencies, while rising slightly against the yen. Its decline was attributed to thin trading ahead of the New Year holiday.

The U.S. unit, thus ended the week at 1.5495 marks, 99.75 yen and at \$1.5665 to sterling.

New York Closing Rates for Major Currencies Against the U.S. Dollar

| Currency | 23/12/94 | 30/12/94 | Percent Change |
|----------------|----------|----------|----------------|
| Sterling Pound | 1.5463 | 1.5665 | 1.31% |
| Deutsche Mark | 1.5793 | 1.5495 | 1.92% |
| Swiss Franc | 1.3529 | 1.3090 | 1.63% |
| French Franc | 5.4525 | 5.3370 | 2.16% |
| Japanese Yen | 100.12 | 99.75 | 0.37% |

* USD Per SFR

Euro-Currency Interest Rates*

| Currency | 1-Month (%) | 3-Month (%) | 6-Month (%) | 1-Year (%) |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| U.S. Dollar | 5.93 | 7.56 | 5.81 | 7.12 |
| Sterling Pound | 5.87 | 7.62 | 5.81 | 7.25 |
| Deutsche Mark | 5.12 | 5.02 | 5.00 | 5.56 |
| Swiss Franc | 3.67 | 4.58 | 3.68 | 4.62 |
| French Franc | 5.68 | 6.94 | 5.63 | 6.81 |
| Japanese Yen | 2.31 | 5.39 | 2.12 | 2.42 |

Interest rate bid rates for month ending 1.1.1995, 1.000.000 or equivalent

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin

| Currency | Bid | Offer |
|----------------|--------|--------|
| U.S. Dollar | 0.7060 | 0.7020 |
| Sterling Pound | 1.0954 | 1.1009 |
| Deutsche Mark | 0.4513 | 0.4536 |
| Swiss Franc | 0.5342 | 0.5369 |
| French Franc | 3.1310 | 0.1317 |
| Japanese Yen | 0.7010 | 0.7045 |
| Dutch Guilder | 0.4031 | 0.4051 |
| Swedish Krona | ***** | ***** |
| Italian Lira | 6.0432 | 0.0434 |
| Belgian Franc | ***** | ***** |

* Per 100

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Vatanen looks for 5th Paris-Dakar title

GARANADA, Spain (AFP) — Ari Vatanen will make an emotional return to the Paris-Dakar rally Sunday, an event he dominated to win four times between 1987 and 1991.

For the second year running the first competitive stage is raced at Granada in Spain on New Year's Day. The rally then sets sail for Africa from Spain to miss Algeria because of the terrorist trouble there.

Flying Finn Vatanen, also world rally champion in 1981, did not compete in the Paris-Dakar the last two seasons to concentrate on the world championship circuit.

But the 42-year-old, who lives in France and will drive for Citroen, was glad to make his seventh appearance in this most prestigious event in the off-road world circuit.

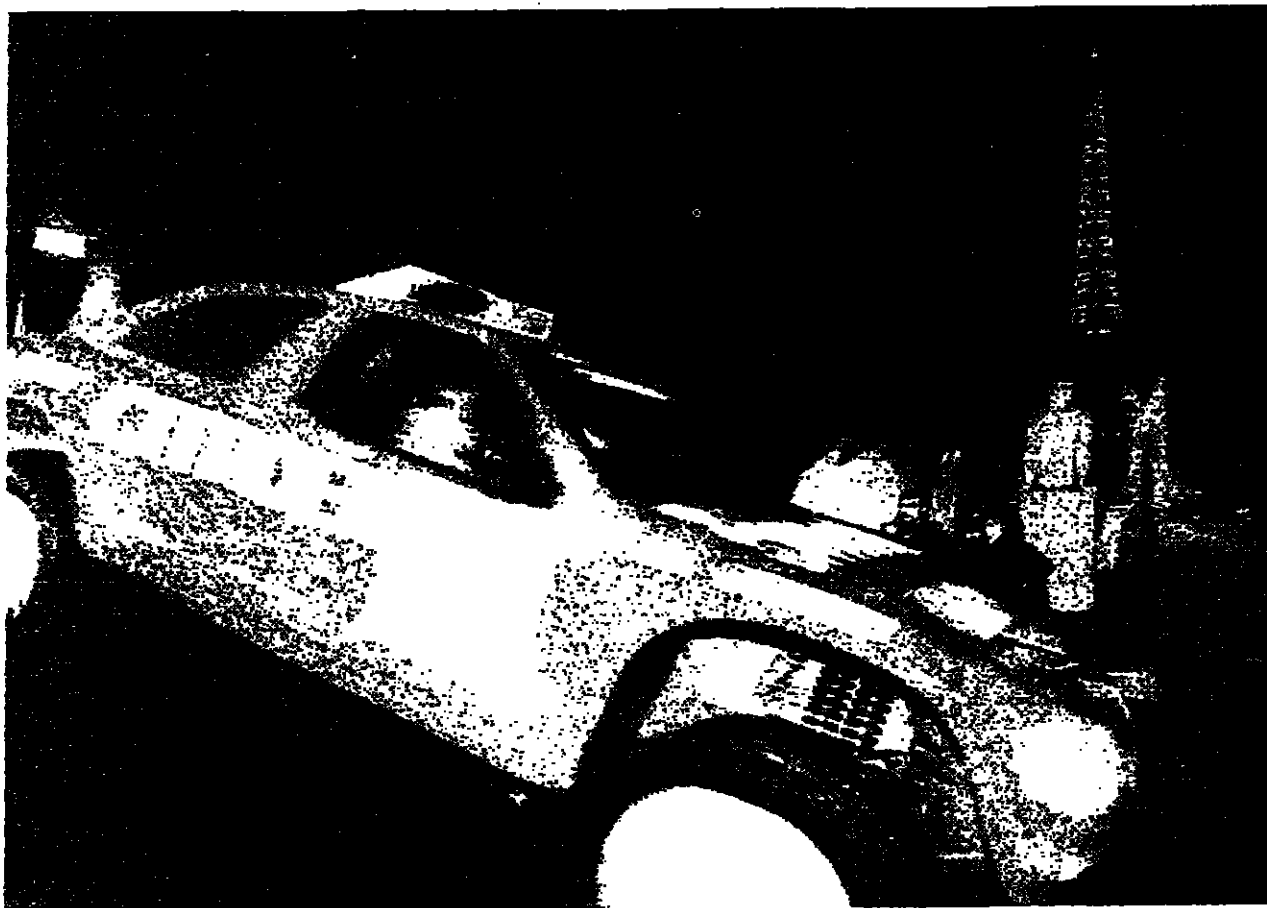
Vatanen said the two circuits required totally different abilities, adding "you cannot compare them, the disciplines are so different. But the Dakar is so important — from a media and an emotional point of view. I have missed it."

France's Hubert Auriol, 1992 race winner and now race director, won the rally twice on a motorbike before breaking both ankles in 1987 and switching to cars.

He has planned a 10,066km drive through five countries. The 14 timed stages on uncharted routes make up 6,169km and a speed limit has been imposed for driving through villages.

In 16 years, 35 drivers have been killed although the number of African villagers killed in remote hamlets is not recorded.

A satellite-linked computer the size of a shoe-box on every car and motorbike will



Finland's Ari Vatanen and French Gilles Picard drive off their Citroen at the predeparture of the Paris-Dakar Rally (AFP photo)

ensure no-one can do a Mark Thatcher. The son of the former British premier gained the rally international attention when he got lost in the Sahara 10 years ago.

The rally has been condemned by the Vatican as a rich man's sport in a starving Africa and occasionally seems to get out of control.

But Auriol said: "It might sometimes seem chaotic but this is Africa. It cannot be

organised like a Formula One grand prix."

Former rally world champion Ari Vatanen of Finland, who has won four times, is favourite in a Citroen ZX.

Jacky Ickx of Belgium, six-time winner of the Le Mans 24 Hour sports car classic and Paris-Dakar winner in 1983, makes his comeback at 49.

Frenchman Marcel Huguery, at 60, is the oldest of the 86 drivers. He is driv-

ing a Toyota Landcruiser.

Stephane Perhansel of France, who missed last year's rally, is favourite to win his fourth motorcycle title. There are 98 riders.

The rally costs about 120,000 francs (\$24,000) for private drivers but Citroen and Mitsubishi will each be investing about 600,000 francs (\$120,000) in what is basically a publicity exercise.

The organisers, who also

put on the Tour de France cycling race, have hired 29 doctors, a mobile operating theatre, 10 helicopters, 22 light aircraft and 32 vehicles to look after the cast of 500.

One million litres of gas and 750,000 litres of kerosene is needed to keep the convoy moving.

Last year's Paris to Dakar and back was a flop so the organisers have returned to the Dakar finish January 15.

Wihdat take 2 point lead; Hussein lose again and drop to 3rd

By Aileen Bannayan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — As first division soccer teams took a much-deserved one week break, Al Wihdat settled comfortably with a two-point lead atop the 12-team standings after a crushing 6-0 victory over Al Jeel, while former leaders Al Hussein dropped to third place after losing 2-0 to Al Ramtha who moved up to second.

With five more weeks left in the competition, Al Ahli finally improved their standing and moved up to fifth after a 1-0 win over Kufroum. It was their third consecutive win after defeating Al Jeel 2-0 and Shabab Al Hussein 4-0. They thus tied with Al Jazireh with 19 points but lead on goal difference.

Al Arabi remained out of the last four for now after their goalless tie with Shabab Al Hussein Saturday. Al Wihdat vs. Jeel: Last placed Al Jeel defied Al Wihdat only during the first half in which Jamal Mahmoud netted Al Wihdat's first goal from a penalty kick in the 27th minute.

However, Al Jeel collapsed in the second half during which Abdallah Abu Zame' added the second goal in the 51st minute. Striker Jihad Abdul Mun'em scored his first goal 12 minutes later giving Al Wihdat a 3-0 lead. Mahmoud received a pass from Marwan Al Shamali to score the fourth goal in the 75th minute.

Abdul Mun'em then added the fifth and sixth

goals in the 82nd and 85th minutes to the delight of over 10,000 cheering fans.

Al Wihdat will next face Kufroum while Al Jeel will play Al Arabi.

Al Jazireh vs. Qadissieh: Al Jazireh have failed to score a victory during the second round of the competition. Their goalless draw against Al Qadissieh was their fourth tie. They also lost to Al Ramtha and Al Faisali and are now sixth.

Al Qadissieh were not much affected by the result: however they will have to score some wins to move out of the relegation-threatened last four.

Al Qadissieh will next play titleholders Al Faisali while Al Jazireh meet Shabab Al Hussein.

Ramtha vs. Hussein: Al Hussein again lost to Al Ramtha by their first round score of 2-0.

Al Ramtha will now have the chance to move ahead when they meet lowly Al Karmel in their upcoming match.

Khaled Al Aggouri scored Al Ramtha's first

goal in the 46th minute, while Badran Al Shaqran added the second in the 83rd minute.

Ahli vs. Kufroum: Al Ahli's win over Kufroum was a vital one demonstrating their consistent form during the second round of the competition was not by chance. Their latest wins have moved them among the top five before they face Al Hussein in their upcoming match.

Natir Yadaaj scored Al Ahli's only goal in the 76th minute.

Faisali vs. Karmel: The titleholders' expected victory was only their second in this round. Their latest string of draws against Al Ahli, Al Wihdat and Al Ramtha and a 1-0 loss to Al Arabi have prevented them from improving their standing.

Striker Jiryes Tadros opened scoring in the 5th minute. Subhi Suleiman added the other two in the 15th and 68th minutes after Subhi Awad and Jamal Abu Abed lost definite chances.

STANDINGS AFTER 17TH WEEK

| | P | W | D | L | GF | GA | Pts. |
|-------------------|----|----|---|----|----|----|------|
| Wihdat | 17 | 12 | 5 | — | 24 | 3 | 29 |
| Ramtha | 17 | 11 | 5 | 1 | 35 | 10 | 27 |
| Hussein | 17 | 12 | 2 | 3 | 42 | 18 | 26 |
| Faisali | 17 | 8 | 7 | 2 | 28 | 9 | 23 |
| Ahli | 17 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 23 | 20 | 19 |
| Jazireh | 17 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 21 | 18 | 19 |
| Kufroum | 17 | 8 | 1 | 8 | 27 | 28 | 17 |
| Arab | 17 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 19 | 27 | 15 |
| Qadissieh | 17 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 19 | 23 | 14 |
| Shabab Al Hussein | 17 | 1 | 4 | 12 | 17 | 37 | 6 |
| Karmel | 17 | 1 | 4 | 12 | 12 | 41 | 6 |
| Jeel | 17 | 1 | 1 | 15 | 10 | 43 | 3 |

Foreign all-stars beat Milan

MILAN (R) — An international all-star team handed European Champions AC Milan a 3-2 defeat in a friendly but the real winners were UNICEF who will be given the \$30,000 receipts.

All eyes were on Bulgarian Hristo Stoichkov but the newly-crowned European Footballer of the year had a quiet afternoon, playing just 65 minutes.

Young Greek striker Nikos Machlas of OFI Crete stole the show, scoring the second for the "Christmas Stars" and then seeing his last minute shot deflected to give his team victory.

Milan's Croatian midfielder Zvonimir Tab Ramos, who suffered a fractured skull in the 1994 World Cup finals, levelled in the 64th minute in front of a 20,000 crowd.

Machlas shot the international team ahead three minutes later before Milan's Paolo Di Canio equalised with a spectacular bicycle kick eight minutes from time.

But Machlas had the final word, his 25-metre shot hitting Milan's Gianluca Sordo and looping over goalkeeper Mario Ielpo.

Ailing Ma to turn over his army to new commander

BEIJING (Agencies) — China said on Saturday it was looking for a temporary replacement for super-coach Ma Junren, who has trained an "army" of women world record holders in middle distance running events but is at odds with some of his athletes over division of money and prizes they won.

"Due to poor management, division of prizes and other problems, it is a fact that there are some differences between Ma Junren and some (team) members," Cui Dalin, deputy director of the Liaoning Provincial Sports Commission in northeastern China, told the China Sports daily.

Ma has been accused of keeping most of the money and prizes won by his superwomen middle and longdistance runners, and one local newspaper said they had packed their bags and gone home.

Cui denied the "Ma family army" of had been disbanded.

"It is not as serious as some small newspapers report it to be. The Liaoning women's middle- and long-distance has not been disbanded," the Ma family army is still persistently training," Cui said.

"The Liaoning Provincial Sports Commission is endeavouring to look for a temporary replacement for coach Ma Junren."

Ma is in hospital after he was hurt in a car crash in Liaoning on Thursday when his Mercedes Benz struck a highway barrier while he was driving from Anshan, his hometown where his father died on December 16, to his training centre in Dalian, officials said Friday.

"Nobody is perfect. Ma Junren has shortcomings and (committed) mistakes, but the organisation can help him rectify and overcome," Cui said.

"The Ma family army does not belong to just one person. The Ma family army belongs to the whole country. We should protect

it, love it and help it so that it can bring more honour and glory to the (Communist) party and the people."

Ma has three Mercedes Benzes and has spent seven million yuan (\$824,000) on his training centre, out of total winnings of his athletes of 10 million yuan (\$1.18 million), the Liberation daily said recently.

The cars were prizes given to three of his superwomen for their performances at a World Athletics meet last year in Stuttgart, Germany, the newspaper said.

The newspaper quoted Wang Junxia, one of the three, as saying she has received 170,000 yuan (\$20,000), \$60,300 and yuan 1,000 (\$12.8) from Ma and that Qu Yanxia, another member of Ma's team, has received about 65,000 yuan (\$7,650).

Wang said that the money she has received is only a part of the total she has won, the newspaper said.



French yachtswoman Isabelle Autissier's disabled yacht bobs in the Southern Ocean off Australia. A naval frigate was expected to reach the crippled yacht at noon Sunday (AFP photo)

Autissier "sad and cold" awaiting rescue

SYDNEY (Agencies) — French solo yachtswoman Isabelle Autissier was spending New Year's eve "sad and cold", adrift in frigid seas between Australia and the Antarctic Saturday as she waited to be winched off her demasted ocean racer.

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority said Autissier had batted down for the night as another front moved into the perilous region — known to sailors as the "roaring forties."

She was reported to be in good health as she faced her fourth night adrift since setting off emergency beacons from her yacht Ecoreuil Poitou Charentes II Wednesday.

Winds in the region about 900 nautical miles (1,600 km) south of Adelaide were blowing above 40 knots, whipping up frigid seas into a three-metre (18-foot) swell.

The Australian frigate Darwin was due in the area about 6.30 a.m. Sunday (1930 GMT Saturday) and it was expected that Autissier would be winched off around 8 a.m. (2100 GMT).

Authority spokesman David Gray said radio contact had been made by overflying Australian Air Force aircraft Saturday.

"I'm fine, in good health, but sad and cold and I'm looking forward to getting

off," Autissier was quoted as saying.

There had been speculation that Autissier, the only woman participant in the BOC round the world solo challenge, may not want to leave her boat as it would disqualify her from the race.

However, Gray said it was clear "she's keen to get off." Gray said weather conditions for the area looked promising for the airlift with winds expected to drop to 20-30 knots.

A Sea Hawk helicopter, with a medical officer aboard, will fly the last (185 km) for the rescue and return to the Darwin within a few hours, he said.

The ship is based in western Australia.

The navy will not be involved in attempt to salvage the high-tech 18-metre (54-foot) yacht, Gray said.

Rescue officials said Autissier had four litres of water and enough food for 24 hours.

Autissier reported Friday that there was a 1.5 metre gash in her cabin which had resulted in flooding the rear compartment. She also said she had lost all steering.

"Her main aim now is to keep as much water out of the boat as possible," Gray said.

Officials said rescuers were

avoiding unnecessary contact.

"They don't want to spend a lot of time talking to her — it only uses up the batteries on her radio," Gray said.

Autissier, 38, was heading for Sydney in the second leg of the BOC round the world solo challenge when she activated the emergency beacons at 5.45 p.m. (0300 GMT) Wednesday.

Autissier has been under constant observation from Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Hercules transport and Orion maritime reconnaissance aircraft, which have circled the yacht in round-the-clock shifts since it was first spotted by a Hercules Thursday.

RAAF personnel had to be recalled from Christmas holidays to maintain a pool of crews for the operation, which defence department sources said is expected to cost more than one million dollars (\$770,000 US).

Serge Viviani, a member of her yacht's land-based support team, talked to her by radio Saturday morning from a Hercules which has been in constant radio communication with her.

Assuming the rescue is successful, the Darwin, which left Fremantle in Western Australia on Thursday, will

take Autissier either to Adelaide in South Australia or to Hobart on the island state of Tasmania.

BOC media director Dan McConnell said the rescue operation had been brought forward by several hours and the helicopter would be launched as soon as it came within range of the yacht.

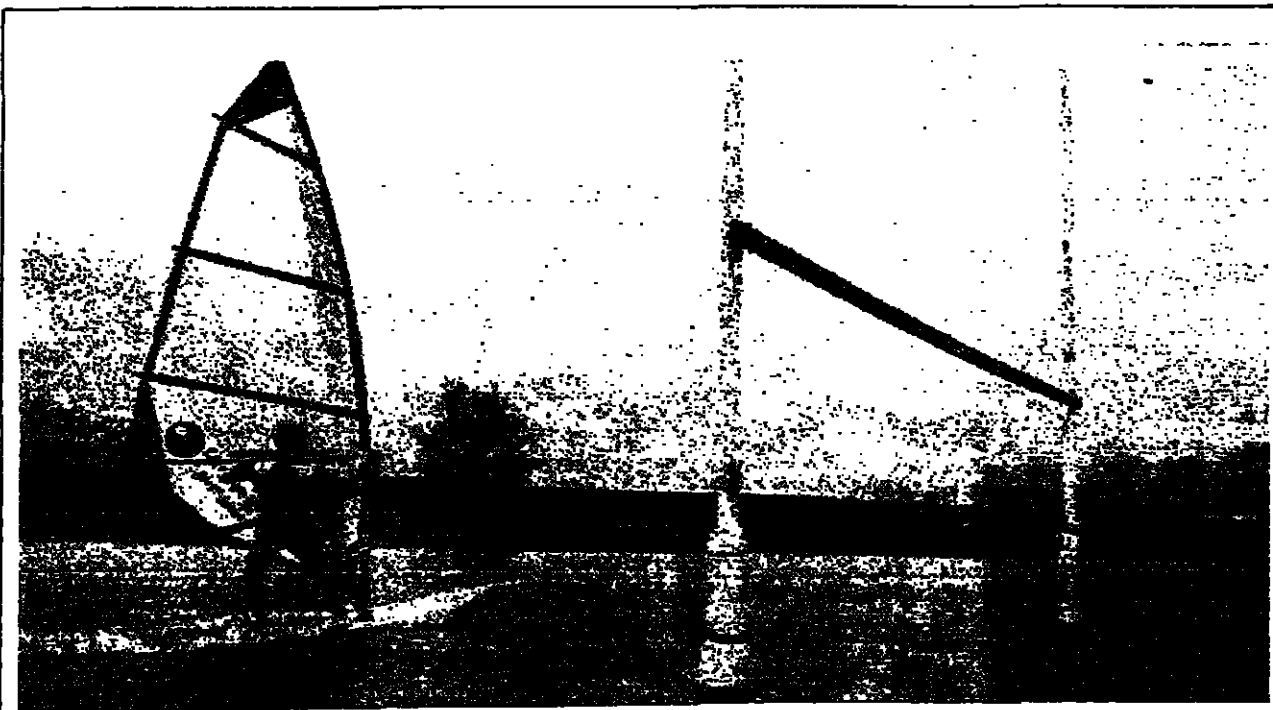
The yacht will be abandoned as it presents no hazard to other shipping, although AMSA officials said it was expected its insurers would attempt to salvage the vessel.

This was the second dismasting for the Ecoreuil Poitou Charentes II. It was forced to stop at Kerguelen island on December 13 for repairs after losing her mast during this second leg from Cape Town to Sydney.

Autissier, who has been sailing since she was seven years old, is a marine science professor from La Rochelle on the west coast of France.

She competed in the 1990-91 BOC singlehanded race and in May, with a crew of three, broke the New York to San Francisco record around Cape Horn by 17 days in the same boat.

Frenchman Christophe Auguin finished first in the leg from South Africa in his sloop Scota Calaberson a fortnight ago.



A windsurfer tries out a flooded rugby pitch as gales lashed Southern England bringing chaos to many rail and road networks (AFP photo)

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Quarterback legends to face off in NFL playoffs

MIAMI (AFP) — It's the most mouth-watering quarterback match-up to grace the first round of the National Football League playoffs — Miami's Dan Marino v Joe Montana of the Kansas City Chiefs.

It will be only the third meeting between the two. Inevitably, it begs the question who is greater — Marino with his four American Conference passing records and his NFL single season records for touchdowns passes and total yardage, or Montana with his four Super Bowl titles?

Both men say the question can't be answered in a single game, but the debate rages on.

"I know people will be looking at the match-up between us," Marino said. "But the real match-up is our defence against Joe and the other way for me."

"I'll be juiced up regardless. It's a playoff game, and that's what it's all about."

Montana, who wants to add at least one more season to his 15-year NFL career, added: "If we were on the field together playing head-to-head, it would be different. But it doesn't work that way."

Between them the two have thrown passes totalling 85,724 yards, that's more than 48 miles, for 601 touchdowns.

They enter Saturday's AFC first-round game as aging, battle-scarred warriors.

Marino, 33, limps noticeably in the wake of surgery last year to repair a torn achilles tendon.

Montana, ever more fragile at 38, has a bruised right knee that forced him out of last week's final regular-season game against the Los Angeles Raiders.

The last time they met it was in the Super Bowl. That was 10 years ago, when Montana led the San Francisco 49ers to a 38-16 victory.

The fact that he is now on a quest for a fifth Super Bowl title only adds to the frustration for Marino, who never made it back to the championship game.

"The rings are a team effort," Montana stresses. "It's not a one-man thing. What he's doing is far and above anything that's been done in this league for years."

Marino is second only to Fran Tarkenton in career passing yardage and touchdowns. Despite the achilles injury, the worst of his 12-year career, he will likely play for several more years.

Montana, who ranks fourth in those categories, hopes to squeeze one more season out of his battered body. But he knows time is short.

"I know it's coming to an end," he said. "It's not something I can come back to, so I want to make it last as long as I can."

Despite his praise for Marino, he also knows that he would not trade his Super Bowl rings for Marino's records.

Given the choice, he said: "I'd take the rings."

O'Neal leads Magic over Clippers

ORLANDO (R) — Shaquille O'Neal scored 38 points and Anfernee Hardaway had 36, including four during a 9-0 Orlando run to start overtime as the Magic gained a 116-105 win over the Los Angeles Clippers Friday.

The Magic led 101-99 with 34 seconds left in regulation, but Tony Massenburg hit a pair of free throws with 26 seconds left for the Clippers, forcing overtime.

Orlando took control in overtime, scoring the first nine points to take a 110-101 lead and cruised from there.

In Cleveland, Mark Price hit a three-pointer to tie the game and converted a technical foul shot in the final 2:19 as the Cleveland Cavaliers beat the Atlanta Hawks 87-85.

The loss denied Atlanta head coach Larry Wilkens of his all-time record 939th career NBA coaching win. Wilkens is tied with former Boston Celtics coach Red Auerbach.

In Milwaukee, Scott Burrell scored 10 of his 25 points during a key run in the second and third quarters as the Charlotte Hornets gained a 101-94 win over the Milwaukee Bucks.

Larry Johnson also scored 25 points for Charlotte, which has won 11 of its last 14 meetings with the Bucks.

Burrell scored 10 of his points to spark a 22-7 Charlotte run that turned a 51-38 second-quarter deficit into a 60-58 in the third.

In Washington, David Robinson scored 30 points and Chuck Person added 27, hitting on eight three-pointers, as the San Antonio Spurs beat the Washington Bullets, 115-101, for their eighth victory in nine games.

Calbert Cheaney scored 23 points and Juwan Howard contributed 18 points and 15 rebounds for the Bullets, who lost their third in a row and 11th in their last 12 games.

At Utah, Hakim Olajuwon scored 37 points and Robert Horry hit two key



Mark Price of the Cleveland Cavaliers #25 dribbles around Rick Fox of the Boston Celtics (AFP photo)

three-pointers down the stretch as the Houston Rockets beat the Utah Jazz, 111-103.

Olajuwon has scored 114 points in his last three games. Vernon Maxwell, scored 16 points for the Rockets.

Karl Malone led Utah with 25 points and 14 rebounds.

In Dallas, Roy Tarpley tied a season-high with 22 points to lead six players in double figures as the Dallas Mavericks cruised to a 110-94 victory over the Golden State Warriors, snapping their losing streak at four games.

Rookie point guard Jason Kidd fell one assist short of a triple double and was one of four Dallas players with 10 or more rebounds.

In Denver, Reggie Williams sank a pair of free throws with 1.2 seconds left to ice the game as the Denver Nuggets held off the Portland Trail Blazers, 118-114.

Clyde Drexler scored 39 points, including eight during a 10-point run that gave Portland a 114-113 lead with 41.7 seconds left. But Denver scored the final five points to seal the win.

Mahmoud Abdul Rauf had 26 points to lead the Nuggets in scoring for the eighth straight game.

In Indiana, Derrick McKey scored 21 points and Reggie Miller scored 10 of his 12 in the decisive third quarter as the Indiana Pacers won their ninth straight home game with a 96-79 rout of the undermanned New Jersey Nets.

Byron Scott had 14 points and Rik Smits 17 for Indiana. Benoit Benjamin had 21 points and 12 rebounds and Armon Gilliam had 18 points and 10 rebounds for the Nets.

In Detroit, Dominique Wilkins scored 32 points and keyed runs in the second and fourth quarters as the Boston Celtics beat the undermanned Detroit Pistons, 124-107.

The Celtics broke a four-game losing streak handed

Detroit its fifth straight defeat. Detroit has lost 10 of its last 11 games. The Pistons played without injured regulars Mark West, Lindsey Hunter, Mark Macon and Oliver Miller.

Mills led the Pistons with 23 points.

In Phoenix, Cedric Ceballos scored 37 points and Nick Van Exel had 21 with a career-high 16 assists as the Los Angeles Lakers snapped the 25-game home winning streak of Phoenix with a 127-112 win over the Suns.

Charles Barkley scored 31 points and hauled in 23 rebounds for the Suns. Dan Majerle also had 31 points for Phoenix.

In Minnesota, Patrick Ewing scored seven of his 30 points during a key 17-6 third-quarter run and the New York Knicks overcame a 16-point deficit for 90-81 victory over the Minnesota Timberwolves.

Derek Harper added 17 points and Charles Smith contributed 16 for the Knicks.

Ewing, who also had 12 rebounds, scored 30 points. In Chicago, B.J. Armstrong scored 26 points, including hitting all five of his three-point attempts, and the Chicago Bulls made a team-record 15 three-pointers in a 133-88 trouncing of the Miami Heat.

Scottie Pippen and Steve Kerr added 17 points apiece for the Bulls, who were 15-of-22 from three-point range.

Rookie Khalid Reeves scored 19 points. In Sacramento, Mitch Richmond scored 21 points and hit two key free throws with 4.5 seconds remaining as the Sacramento Kings held off the Philadelphia 76ers, 85-82.

Walt Williams had 20 points and 11 rebounds for Sacramento. Dana Barros scored 23 points for Philadelphia.

RESULTS

| | | | |
|-------------|-----|--------------|----------|
| Cleveland | 87 | Atlanta | 85 |
| Indiana | 96 | New Jersey | 79 |
| Orlando | 116 | LA Clippers | 105 (OT) |
| San Antonio | 115 | Washington | 101 |
| Boston | 124 | Detroit | 107 |
| New York | 90 | Minnesota | 81 |
| Chicago | 133 | Miami | 88 |
| Dallas | 110 | Golden State | 94 |
| Charlotte | 101 | Milwaukee | 94 |
| Denver | 118 | Portland | 114 |
| LA Lakers | 127 | Phoenix | 112 |
| Houston | 111 | Utah | 103 |
| Sacramento | 85 | Philadelphia | 82 |

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Milla signs for Indonesian club

YAOUNDE (AFP) — Former Cameroon international Roger Milla has come out of retirement to sign with an Indonesian club, it was revealed this week. Milla, who became the oldest player to appear and score in a World Cup in a 6-1 loss to Russia in San Francisco, has left for Jakarta. However, Milla's departure surprised both the Cameroon Football Federation and the sports ministry as he is officially still the administrative director of the national side. Milla was arguably the major personality at the 1990 World Cup in Italy as his goals, celebrated with his own "snake hips" style dance, helped Cameroon to the quarter-finals.

Pistons centre has surgery on hand

AUBURN HILL, Michigan (AFP) — Oliver Miller of the Detroit Pistons had surgery Friday for a broken right hand and will be out for four to six weeks, the National Basketball Association team said. Miller had a pin inserted in his right hand after doctors decided his hand was not healing properly. Doctors also put guard Mark Macon's sprained right ankle in a cast. He is expected to be in the cast for a week and be back on court a week after that.

Top player killed in car smash

CHIETI, Italy (R) — Andrei Kuznetsov, Russian international volleyball player with Italian side Les Copains, died in a road crash Friday night, the club said Saturday. A car being driven by Ukraine-born Kuznetsov, 28, hit a guard rail alongside a central Italian highway, police said. No other vehicle was involved. Kuznetsov's wife was slightly injured in the accident but his two children escaped unhurt. "This is an irreparable human and technical loss for us," said Les Copains coach Vanni Monari.

Newcastle's Albert could be lost for season

LONDON (R) — English title contenders Newcastle may have lost Belgian international defender Philippe Albert for the rest of the season. British papers reported on Saturday that Albert was carried off the training ground in agony Friday after twisting his knee. Newcastle manager Kevin Keegan, whose fourth-placed side were playing Norwich away in the Premier League, was quoted as saying he believed the injury to be serious. "It looks like cruciate ligaments and that means we can forget him for the rest of the season," said Keegan. "It's a tremendous loss and I'm desperately disappointed for him."

'No room for Salenko'

MOSCOW (R) — Russian national coach Oleg Romantsev finally spelled out that he had no room in his squad for Valencia striker Oleg Salenko, who this year set a World Cup record by scoring five times in a single game. "Every coach has his own concept ... at this time my assistants and I are selecting those players who we think can help us the most," he told a live soccer discussion programme on Russian television. "It's time we stopped bringing up this topic so often because it's starting to bore me," he said when asked why Salenko was no longer playing for Russia. Romantsev dropped Salenko for the European Championships qualifier against San Marino in October, saying he had not earned the right to automatic selection. Russian journalists say Romantsev does not like Salenko, one of a number of players who rebelled against former coach Pavel Sadryin before the World Cup and then changed their minds. Salenko — who scored a record five goals against Cameroon and finished as joint leading scorer in the World Cup — insists he should be in the squad and says Romantsev wants to drop all those rebels who returned to the fold.

No Davis Cup contract for Becker

HAMBURG (AFP) — Boris Becker will not sign a contract with the German Tennis Federation to compete in the Davis Cup, the triple Wimbledon champion's lawyer Axel Meyer-Wolden has said. Meyer-Wolden said "if Becker's physical condition allows it, he will be available to play in the Davis Cup, if the federation so wishes. A contract is not necessary for that." The German press is currently speculating on Becker's participation next year in this event — effectively the world's team tennis championship. Becker led Germany to victory in 1988 and 1989.

NHL lawyers to hold weekend talks

NEW YORK (R) — With the National Hockey League facing a January 16th deadline for the cancellation of what is left of the 1994-95 season, lawyers for the two sides in the labour dispute will meet this weekend. Players Association head Bob Goodenow and NHL commissioner Gary Bettman talked by telephone and scheduled the meetings as the lockout nears the end of its third month. The general consensus is that an agreement must be reached in approximately one week in order to start the season by the owner's desired date. Toronto Maple Leafs general manager Cliff Fletcher is returning from a vacation in Hawaii and will represent the owners as well as NHL vice president Jeffrey Pash. The union will be represented by lawyers Bob Riley and John MacCambridge.

Overwiesenthal combined called off

BONN (R) — A nordic combination world cup team event scheduled for Saturday and Sunday in the German resort of Overwiesenthal was called off because of heavy rain and a lack of snow, organisers said. They added that a sprint event scheduled for January 3 in Reit im Winkl and another team event set for January 7 and 8 in Schonach, also in Germany, were also in danger of postponement or cancellation. A decision was due to be made on Sunday.

Counselling proposed for Malaysian match-fixers

KUALA LUMPUR (R) — Players involved in the Malaysian match-fixing scandal may receive police-supervised counselling — a proposal welcomed by the country's soccer authorities. Malaysian Football Association deputy president Abdullah Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah said rehabilitation would be best for the players because many were young and did not realise the consequences of their action. Abdullah said counselling should start immediately as Malaysia's soccer image had been badly dented in 1994.

Hong Kong official appeals for China

HONG KONG (AFP) — One of Asia's most senior Olympic officials appealed for China to be given a chance to prove it was free of drugs. Arnaldo de Oliveira Sales, a leading member of the Olympic Council of Asia executive, called for patience in dealing with Chinese sport following the multiple drug failures of its swimmers. China has pulled out of the World Cup shortcourse meeting here next Tuesday and Wednesday. Sales, president of Hong Kong's amateur swimming association, said China now had to be left to investigate the cases of world champions Lu Bin, Yang Aihua and the five other swimmers who tested positive at the Asian Games in October. "Let us give China a chance to find out for themselves what had happened," he said. "Every schoolboy knows the sports in which competitors are on steroids," he added. "Swimming is generally not one of them." However, evidence still coming out of the former East Germany would suggest that most of the DDR swimmers used steroids.

Austrian springs surprise at four Hills

OBERSTDORF, Germany (R) — Austrian teenager Reinhard Schwarzenberger, who had never before even qualified for a final jump-off, upset the favourites to win the first part of the prestigious Four Hills Ski Jumping event Friday. Schwarzenberger, 17, pulled off a massive 118-metre second jump in driving rain at Oberstdorf to sail past first round leader and Olympic gold medalist Jens Weissflog of Germany. Weissflog, who had also recorded 118 metres with his first jump, had to settle for third place behind Austria's Andreas Goldberg after slipping to just 106.5 metres on his second leap.



Boris Becker

Man. United's manager made CBE

LONDON (R) — Soccer manager Alex Ferguson of Manchester United and retired New Zealand rugby union star Grant Fox were among several sports personalities named Saturday in the queen's new year's honours list.

Ferguson, who guided his club to two successive English League titles and the double last season, was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE).

"It's the best birthday present you could get," said Ferguson, 53, on Saturday, whose side won the League and F.A. Cup last May, becoming only the fourth English team this century to do the double.

Ferguson, a Scot, was 10

years ago made an Officer of the order of the British Empire (OBE) following his Scottish League and cup double as manager of Aberdeen.

Although Ferguson failed in his bid to emulate the late Sir Matt Busby and bring the European Cup back to Old Trafford, his CBE is seen as a fitting reflection of his success in returning the glamour to one of English football's most illustrious names.

"I think it's a recognition of the club and our achievements over the past six years," he said. "We've also had the honour of the knighthood for Bobby Charlton earlier this year and now this award for myself."

A CBE also went to English rugby football union

secretary Dudley Wood, who is set to retire in July after the world cup in South Africa.

Master golfer Keith Fox, who retired this year after scoring a New Zealand record 645 points in 46 test matches — the second highest in international rugby union — was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE).

Welshman Jonathan Davies, one of the most successful converts to rugby league after starring for his country as a rugby union flyhalf, was also awarded an MBE.

"It's a great honour and nice to be appreciated like this for services to the game of rugby in general," the Britain test star said.

Injury-hit Newcastle crash at Norwich

LONDON (R) — Injury-hit Newcastle's English Championship slump continued on Saturday with a 2-1 defeat at Norwich.

They went two goals down in the opening nine minutes.

Neil Adams was unmarked as he sent a perfectly judged looping header in over Newcastle's Czech goalkeeper Pavel Srnec from a free-kick by Ian Crook in the first minute.

The Newcastle defence, without injured Belgian international Philippe Albert,

conceded another goal when Norwich's recent signing Ashley Ward controlled Mike Milligan's long range shot superbly and fired home his fourth goal in five games.

Former Norwich striker Ruel Fox, the liveliest member of a Newcastle attack deprived of England's Peter Beardsley through injury, pulled a goal back from the penalty spot five minutes before half-time after Robert Ullathorne had fouled striker Paul Kitson.

But Newcastle, despite

dominating the second half, failed to score again thanks to an inspired display by Norwich's new goalkeeper Andy Marshall, deputising for injured Scotland international Bryan Gunn.

Newcastle, League leaders until early November but with only one win in their last 10 games, remained fourth, seven points adrift of leaders Blackburn.

The rest of the Premier League matches were starting later in the afternoon.

Electronic line-judging fails

PERTH (R) — Tennis's latest experiment with electronic line-judging gave officials an early headache on Saturday as Austria beat Argentina 2-1 in the first round of the Hopman Cup.

The system, in use for the second year at the mixed team tournament, worked perfectly in the opening women's singles as Judith Wiesner downed Ines Gorroategui in straight sets.

But unexpected bleeps from the machine interrupted both sets of Horst Skoff's 6-1 6-4 victory over Javier Frana, reviving memories of 12 months ago when Frenchman Cedric Pioline's unusual racket threw the system into confusion.

Skoff, in particular, was irritated, but tournament director Paul McNamee insisted the cause was merely a 'sticky' handset and an umpire with little experience of the equipment.

Before the tournament McNamee expressed total confidence in the tel (Tennis Electronic Lines) system, but he admitted on Saturday that human line-judges were again on standby if problems persisted.

The unseeded Argentine pairing of Gorroategui and

Frana proved similarly erratic in their singles matches on their country's debut in the 12-team event.

World number 20 Gorroategui served seven double faults, including two on game points, to assist Wiesner to a 6-1 7-5 win in 95 minutes.

The left-handed Frana did save three match points but was otherwise unconvincing against the lively Skoff, ranked 65 places above him.

Argentina did salvage some pride by taking the 'dead' doubles match 6-4 7-5 as the eighth-seeded Austrian pair pondered a quarter-final meeting with neighbours Germany, represented by Boris Becker and Anke Huber.

Becker is ranked 3rd in the world and Huber 12th. Huber, partnered by Bernd Karbacher, reached the final of last year's competition before going down to the Czech Republic's Petr Korda and Jana Novotna.

In a second first-round tie Sunday, South Africa's Christo Van Rensburg and Amanda Coetzer, seeded seventh in this tournament, meet Australia's Pat Cash and Kristine Radford.

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Fresh efforts launched to seek Afghan peace

KABUL (AFP) — A high-ranking U.N. delegation has arrived in Kabul to pave the way for the imminent arrival of U.N. special envoy Mahmoud Meftari, spokesman Charles Santos told journalists Saturday.

Mr. Santos would not state the purpose of Mr. Meftari's visit. But it was expected to be the latest of U.N. efforts to end factional fighting between forces for and against Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani and to reach a durable political settlement.

"Meftari will meet the president and other Afghan leaders, including Ahmad Shah Masoud," said Mr. Santos, who is political advisor to Mr. Meftari. He did not specify exactly when the U.N. envoy would arrive.

He also said it was not yet clear whether Mr. Meftari would meet Mr. Rabbani's main rival, Hezb-e-Islami faction chief Gulbuddin Hekmatyar on this visit, but stressed "he will see Hekmatyar, that's definite."

The U.N. has asked for a ceasefire for the duration of Mr. Meftari's visit, which they hope to parlay into a permanent cessation of hostilities.

"A permanent ceasefire is something of concern to the U.N., it's very important," Mr. Santos said.

David Lockwood, head of the U.N. Development Programme (UNDP), who flew by special U.N. flight to Afghanistan with Mr. Santos, said a political settlement to the

Afghan crisis would have a positive effect on the flow of economic aid to this war-battered country.

"If there is tangible progress for peace there is a greater possibility of funds from the international donors," said Mr. Lockwood.

Mr. Santos drew attention to a recent U.N. resolution that was passed Dec. 20 with the backing of 50 co-sponsors, as an example of the new "hands-on approach" that the world body is keen to adopt over Afghanistan.

"There is a higher level of international commitment to Afghanistan," Mr. Santos added.

He said as a result of this resolution U.N. personnel concerned with Afghan political affairs, those from the Office of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan (OSGA), will no longer shuttle back and forth from Pakistan, but will move permanently from Islamabad to Afghanistan.

"The first U.N. political presence will be in Jalalabad, with numerous visits to Kabul," Mr. Santos said, adding that eventually OSGA would be permanently located in Kabul.

Meanwhile, no announcement has come from Mr. Rabbani concerning a transfer of power on Saturday, the last official day of his two-year interim body.

Following the rumble of heavy weapons fire Friday night the Kabul frontlines

were calm Saturday and no major rocketing incident was reported.

The Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) on Saturday urged the warring Afghan factions to accept a ceasefire to enable the U.N. peace envoy to visit Afghanistan.

An OIC statement said its secretary general, Hamid Alghabab, "requested all Afghan parties to accept and abide by the ceasefire appeal issued by the United Nations to enable the U.N. special mission... to visit various parts of Afghanistan."

Envoys from the United Nations and the 52-member OIC have been trying to bring about a permanent ceasefire between the warring sides in Afghanistan, but without success so far.

Afghan sources said on Thursday Mr. Meftari had asked for a three-day truce at a meeting with representatives of a coordination council of opponents of President Rabbani to enable him to visit Kabul.

The council promised to consider the request, they said.

"On Monday, Mr. Rabbani's administration last week declared a unilateral ceasefire and offered to step down under a formula it sought to agree with its opponents."

But his opponents called the offer a trick and have not ordered a ceasefire.



Medical examiners remove the body of a woman from The Planned Parenthood Clinic of Greater Boston in Brookline, Massachusetts, where a gunman shot four people on Friday.

A second clinic was attacked eight blocks away leaving a total of two dead and five wounded (AFP photo)

Huge search on for U.S. abortion clinic gunman

BOSTON (Agencies) — Police have launched a massive manhunt for the gunman who shot dead two women at abortion clinics outside Boston on Friday in attacks that President Bill Clinton called an act of "domestic terrorism."

Police helicopters hovered over an apartment complex near the shooting scene in Brookline, Massachusetts, hours after Friday's attacks as patrolmen on foot and using dogs combed the area.

Boston and Massachusetts state police were backed by federal agents in the search for the unidentified gunman, who fled the shooting scenes in a white car within minutes of the two consecutive attacks in which five people were wounded.

The killings brought to five the number of people gunned down at U.S. clinics that perform abortions since March 1993.

Using helicopters and search dogs to scour the area, police were tracking an assailant witnesses described as a man in his early thirties dressed in black.

Police have issued a description for a white male, medium height, with dark complexion and curly dark hair, but authorities could not say with certainty that the same man did both shootings.

Officials have made no arrests and U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno said the Justice Department, armed with new anti-violence laws for abortion clinics, would enter the investigation.

Massachusetts Governor William Weld told reporters he has deployed state police to guard clinics around the state.

"This type of attempt at intimidation of women getting access to health care to which they're entitled is

obviously completely unacceptable," Mr. Weld said, adding: "This man is nothing other than a terrorist."

President Clinton condemned the attacks as "meaningless violence."

In the first incident, witnesses said the man entered the Planned Parenthood clinic where abortions are performed and started shooting around 10:15 a.m. (14:15 GMT).

One woman died there and three people suffered wounds in the clinic located in a busy business district.

Another three people were injured at a second clinic in the vicinity, the Preterm Health Services clinic.

At the Preterm clinic, witnesses said the gunman opened fire inside at a receptionist and office worker, then fled to the street where he turned and fired at people scrambling out of the building.

A woman wounded at Preterm died in a hospital emergency room, authorities said.

The shootings brought immediate calls from leading abortion rights groups for stronger government action to stop violence at women's health clinics.

The violence has continued despite passage last May of a new law, the freedom of access to clinic entrances, designed to protect clinics without obstructing peaceful protests by anti-abortion groups.

"These shooters are in fact supported by a network like any other terrorists," said Ann Lewis, a vice president of the Planned Parenthood Federation, saying that public outrage, tougher law enforcement and toned-down rhetoric within the anti-abortion movement are all needed to stop the violence.

Two killed, 25 injured in attack on Turkish coach

ANKARA (Agencies) — Four people killed two passengers and wounded 25 others in a machine-gun attack on a coach in north-western Turkey's Kocaeli region early Saturday, the Anatolia news agency reported.

Three men and a woman forced the driver to stop the vehicle which was going from the capital Ankara to Istanbul, made other passengers move to the back of the bus, opened fire on them and threw a hand grenade.

An 18-year-old woman and a 25-year-old man were killed in the 4:00 a.m. (0200 GMT) attack near Hereke, 100 kilometres from Istanbul, and 25 of the 50 passengers were injured, Anatolia said.

Police and troops launched a major operation to try to track down the assailants, who fled after the attack.

Nobody had claimed the responsibility for the killings early Saturday.

Over the past year bomb blasts in Istanbul and Ankara have been blamed either on Kurdish rebels, Islamic fundamentalists or leftist urban guerrilla groups.

The attack occurred about nine hours after a bomb exploded in a cafe in the five-star Marmara Hotel in the centre of Istanbul, killing one person and wounding two.

Bike Gureli, general manager of the hotel, told Reuters the bomb was left in the pocket of a coat hanging in a cafe at the hotel entrance.

The cafe was packed at the time but the impact of the

NEWS IN BRIEF

Brazil, N. Ireland optimistic about 1995

LONDON (R) — The people of Northern Ireland, heartened by the ceasefires which have ended a 25-year catalogue of violence, and the Brazilians are among the world's most optimistic as 1995 begins, an opinion poll showed on Sunday. The poll of 45 countries conducted for the Swiss-registered Gallup International Association showed 67 per cent of Northern Irish people expect the New Year to be an improvement on 1994. Only seven per cent expect it to be worse. Rivaling Northern Ireland for optimism was Brazil, where 68 per cent of those interviewed in Latin America's biggest nation were hopeful about 1995, and only 10 per cent were pessimistic. Free-market champion Fernando Henrique Cardoso takes over as president of Brazil on New Year's Day.

Bangladesh speaker hospitalised

DHAKA (R) — Sheikh Razzak Ali, speaker of Bangladesh's national parliament, was being treated Saturday for mild chest pains after being hospitalised overnight, family sources said. His daughter said Mr. Ali was being held in an intensive care unit of Dhaka's National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases and added that tests were under way. "He is feeling better now and will not be released from hospital until the tests are over," she said. Mr. Ali, a leader in the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party, developed chest pains on returning to the capital late Friday from his southwestern Khulna constituency. He was travelling with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. During the trip, Mr. Ali had called on the opposition to end a political confrontation with the ruling party. He called on opposition leaders to respond positively to Ms. Zia's announcement that she had agreed to demands to step down prior to elections scheduled for early 1996. Ms. Zia had said she would resign 30 days before the poll.

3 killed in shootout with German police

GERMERSHEIM, Germany (R) — Three armed robbers were killed and one policeman was seriously injured early on Saturday in an exchange of gunfire in a pub in the town of Gernersheim near Frankfurt, police said. The dead, who appeared to be Turks, were shot by two police officers. One other suspected robber was overpowered and arrested at the scene, they said. Police said the four men entered the pub and spread out among the 20 or customers, all of whom appeared to be Turkish. When they pulled handguns and a machine pistol one customer managed to get out and alert police. All four gunmen opened fire on the first two police officers to arrive at the scene, a 22-year-old woman police sergeant and a male officer aged 30. The policeman was hit in the leg but returned fire and three of the robbers were killed in the ensuing gunfire, police said. The policeman, who suffered severe shock, made the lone arrest.

AFP names new director of information

PARIS (AFP) — The board of Agence France-Presse has approved the appointment of Yvan Chemla, 60, as director of news, the third-ranking post in the agency, as successor to Georges Biannic. Mr. Chemla, who has just completed a term as regional director for Asia and the Pacific, based in Hong Kong, will take up his new post in the first half of next year. Mr. Biannic, who was director of news for five years, again after a period spent in Hong Kong, will be appointed to an as yet unnamed post.

Liberia ceasefire appears to hold

MONROVIA (R) — Liberia's fledgling ceasefire appeared to be holding on Saturday, on the eve of a year during which the country's warlords have promised to restore peace and end five years of civil war, U.N. aid sources said. The truce, agreed under a Dec. 21 peace deal which envisages elections next November, came into effect at midnight on Dec. 28. "Since the ceasefire took effect we have not heard of any fighting anywhere," a U.N. security source in the capital Monrovia told Reuters, repeating unconfirmed reports of clashes between militia factions outside the capital. Aid sources in the southern port of Buchanan reported that all was quiet near there.

Russian officer killed in Tajikistan

MOSCOW (AFP) — A Russian colonel serving with peacekeeping forces in Tajikistan was shot and killed by an unknown gunman in the centre of the capital Dushanbe, the Interfax news agency reported Saturday. It said the attack happened on Friday evening and that Colonel Vladimir Dolmatov, 37, commander of an armoured battalion of the 201st motorised division of the Russian army, died on his way to hospital. His assailant escaped. In 1994, 11 members of the peacekeeping force in the Central Asian republic of Tajikistan have been killed in attacks. About 15,000 Russian troops are deployed in the country where the authorities and Muslim rebels have been fighting a bloody civil war since 1992.

Nearly half polled oppose Clinton rerun

NEW YORK (R) — Nearly half of all Americans think President Bill Clinton should not seek reelection, according to a Newsweek poll released on Friday. The poll was conducted before Mr. Clinton told wire service reporters on Thursday that he intends to run for office in 1996 and could see nothing that would make him change his mind. While 47 per cent polled said Mr. Clinton should bow out of the running in two years, only 44 per cent felt he should seek another term. Princeton Survey Research Associates surveyed 728 adults Tuesday and Wednesday for the magazine poll that has a margin of error of plus or minus four percentage points.

Iraq paper sees end to sanctions, return to fold

BAGHDAD (AFP) — The United Nations will in 1995 lift the sanctions in force against Iraq since its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait, an official newspaper predicted Saturday.

Al-Iraq, run by Kurdish parties loyal to Baghdad, also saw hope for the country regaining its place in the Arab World after its ostracisation because of the invasion.

"1995 will witness the collapse of the blockade," it said, referring to the crippling U.N. embargo.

"The first months of 1995 will witness a positive change in Iraq's favour within international bodies... as the U.S.-British axis inside the U.N. Security Council is increasingly isolated," it said.

The other permanent members of the council — France, Russia and China — have been lobbying for sanctions to be eased, after Baghdad in November recognised Kuwait's sovereignty, a key U.N. demand.

But the United States and Britain insist sanctions be kept in place until Baghdad implements all Security Council resolutions passed after the 1991 Gulf war which evicted Iraqi troops from Kuwait.

On the home front, Al Iraq said next year would see the government regain control of the north of the country that has been held by the Kurdish opposition since 1991.

The year "1995 will see Kurdistan return to the

homeland, closing forever the chapter of treason." Al Iraq assured, noting northern Iraq had been rocked by clashes between rival Kurdish factions.

The paper also hoped Iraq would return to the Arab fold, after its ostracisation because of the Kuwait invasion.

"The Arabs will hopefully take measures in order to correct the course of events,"

have realised the dangers of cancelling Iraq's role, which led parties to be dragged into the Zionists' arms."

In Cairo, meanwhile, Arab League chief Esmat Abdul Meguid foresaw Iraq's reintegration on condition that it resolved the issue of Kuwaiti prisoners taken during the Gulf crisis.

"To achieve the reconciliation we have for, Iraq must take an initiative toward the release of the Kuwaiti prisoners or those it calls the missing," Dr. Abdul Meguid told the Egyptian newspaper Al-Ahram.

"It is important to find a swift solution to this humanitarian question so that Iraq can once again become an additional force for united Arab action," said the secretary general.

Dr. Abdul Meguid said he would embark on a tour of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates on Monday aimed at securing a reconciliation after the rift which emerged because of the invasion of Kuwait.

Militant hanged in Cairo; authorities step up security

CAIRO (Agencies) — An Islamic militant was hanged in Cairo on Saturday for belonging to an underground group working to overthrow the Egyptian government, the official news agency MENA said.

The Interior Ministry, meanwhile, said security had been stepped up for New Year's Eve.

The executed convict, Hamad Lutfi Abdul Baki, of the Al Gamaa Al Islamiyah, was also found guilty of plotting to carry out terrorist attacks and for possession of weapons and explosives, MENA said.

He was arrested in November, after having already been sentenced to death in absentia before a military court at the start of the year. He was allegedly paid \$40,000 to mount attacks.

President Hosni Mubarak, who rejected an appeal from Abdul Baki for his life, transferred the trials of Islamic militants from civilian to military courts in October 1992 for swifter and harsher verdicts.

Sixty death sentences have since been passed, 41 of which have now been carried out. The last hanging took place on Nov. 9 in the north-

ern city of Alexandria.

More than 550 people have been killed since Islamic militants declared war on the government in March 1992.

The Interior Ministry said security measures had been stepped up outside churches, hotels, nightclubs, restaurants and cinemas to guard against attacks on New Year's Eve.

Police have said they foiled attacks planned for Saturday by making more than 40 arrests of suspected Islamic militants trying to reform the underground Talaeh Al-Fatah (see page 2).

Ten thousand tourists arrived at Cairo airport in the previous two days, according to Al Wafid newspaper.

Abdul Baki was convicted of planting explosives at a military airbase near the Libyan border in the hope of assassinating President Mubarak during a visit, security sources said.

Abdul Baki was sentenced to death in his absence by a military court in Alexandria in March along with another civilian and an army officer.

The two others — Lieutenant Medhat Eltahawi and Mohammed Said Saleh — were executed in March.



Gambian women may have rare AIDS immunity

LONDON (R) — British doctors reported Sunday they had found a group of Gambian prostitutes who seemed to have some kind of natural immunity to the virus that causes AIDS. Dr. Sarah Rowland-Jones of Britain's Medical Research Council said the discovery could help researchers find a vaccine against the deadly HIV virus. She reported in the journal Nature Medicine that the women, regular visitors to a British-run clinic, were known prostitutes who did not regularly use condoms. "We know they have been infected with the virus but we can't find it now," she said in a telephone interview. "They probably got exposed to HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) at least once a month." The six women all had T-cells specific to HIV. T-cells are white blood cells that kill other cells that have been infected with viruses. "People are beginning to feel they are the most important defence against HIV," Dr. Rowland-Jones said. "They are probably the main reason that people stay well for as long as they stay well during HIV infection." It can take years to show any symptoms of AIDS. The women showed no sign of HIV infection and were very healthy. They did not have any of the symptoms associated with AIDS such as diarrhoea, weight loss or a lack of energy. "Yet we could detect fairly high levels of these T-cells against HIV," Dr. Rowland-Jones said. "What we hope it means is that they may be immune." She added: "The best hope is that they have cleared it but it is possible that they have a low-level infection that we cannot find."

Researcher finds better way to stop smoking

DURHAM, NC (R) — Is one of your New Year's resolutions to quit smoking? A Duke University researcher says using a combination of nicotine patches and a blood pressure medicine may give you a better chance at succeeding. Dr. Ted Rose, head of Durham Veterans Affairs Medical Centre's Nicotine Research Lab, says a new treatment using nicotine patches plus daily doses of Mecamylamine is about eight times more effective in keeping smokers away from cigarettes than the patches alone. In a hospital trial, Dr. Rose found that Mecamylamine blocks the receptors in the brain which respond positively to nicotine. The medication has largely been discontinued for use against hypertension due to side effects of dizziness and disorientation. But when Mecamylamine is taken in small doses together with the nicotine patch, the side effects of the two drugs effectively cancel each other out, he said in a statement issued earlier this week. Patients need to undergo the treatment for only two months, while smokers using just the nicotine patches sometimes stay on that treatment for years while trying to break the cigarette habit, he said. Both drugs have already been approved separately by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and Dr. Rose said he hoped that their use together would be approved within a year or two.

Intestinal cancer drug gets green light

MUNICH, Germany (AFP) — German medical researchers gained official clearance Friday to market a new drug treatment for intestinal cancer, a news report said. The medicine, produced by the Paul-Ehrlich Institute, is a "completely new form of therapy," the federal institute's director Professor Reinhard Karch was quoted as saying by the weekly Focus magazine. The drug mobilises the body's immune system to fight the diseased cells. It could cut death rates from intestinal cancer by a third, the magazine said. It can only be used if the disease is detected early, and not if the sufferer has developed secondary tumours, the magazine said.

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